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# EDITORIAL NOTES

Warren Lapine

When Kerin, Tim, and amounced that we were launching Barch Mitters, we were abild that which these appropriate there man now up to could amount with the support that there man now up to could amount without major financial backing in today's numericapies. Every his of conventional works and the three couldn's succeed, and syst, errored only with the feelight and yet put together an appetitive worth reading people would read it, we proceeded. In retrospect, Funst admit that the obstacled that we find were formidable, and had we rusly understood the state desired of any see might not have embedded on journey. Notice was perhaps our arranged mass. We interply that I know that

what we were going to do reat suppossible usual after we had done it.

We printed one first sine without a smark as a single duti-blase on board.

We had no way to get Harsh Misteres into stores and no money for an adcompange. The inhald have been the rule for us, but want.

Stores we didn't realize that we couldn't just wall, up in major eathers at it.

Stores we didn't realize that we couldn't just wall, up in major eathers at the store of the store of

Hearth Mistract, found in way itsu interes across shortica and people benegit. One circulation for replied and no nee as filling to this two way? moscord obout the magazine. The first shap we classified with the work? moscord obout the magazine. The first shap we classified with effect in the constraint of the magazine and the state of the magazine and the magazine and the state of the stat

our name. Obviously, we don't want to put off any pointment readers, on we have detailed to change our name. Our control of the control of th

great advantage stories from established writers, and we will endemore to find great new writers, for your enjoyment. I'm stare that those of you who are along for a second time have already fairened your read belts, and for those of you who are joining us for the first time, backle to, it's come to be a ball of a rule. HARSH
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## Sortie

Hal Clement

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His Atoff screen was offering one of its occasional, brief, random views of Sergeant Gene Belvew's real surroundings, cutting him off for half a second from those of Oceanus deep in Titan's atmosphere, when the pipe stall occurred.

By would, the reflected at one level of his small, lie dole, "would," is the lack to run most from his reviews alricule.

It would, he reflected at one level of his mind. He didn't believe in an unqualified Murchy's Law, which was strictly for civilians, but a scientist of any rank understood Murphy's Law of Selective Observation. If the jets had chosen any other time. he would have known it was coming, forestalled it easily without real thought, and for gotten it promptly as unimportant. As it was, his first warning was the waldo suit's use of nonvisual input. It administered a sharp chill almost simultaneously in both of his elbows. By the time he could see Titan again, half a second later, thrust was gone and accelerometers showed that Oceanur was being slowed sharnly by the dense atmosphere. His reflexes had already operated, of course, yest a trifle later than they would have from a visual stimules. The aircraft had practically no reaction mass in its tanks; he had been trying to replenish that at the time. The beg satallite's gravity, which his body in orbit couldn't feel any more than it could the deceleration, was feeble; if the craft

slowed too much now, even the vertical dive he was entering

Driving mine the method would not have him physically—the winds 's reducted that' to get hat at — how would not be a shall wished 's reducted that' by the hat at—how would not be a shall of them had been treas that for from the sam. For mercassingly states that the same proposed to the same of the same part of the hard and how meaning imministration by a both pages and the same markow resumed imministration by the pages and the same pages and the

Yes, he was still in the updraft; the screen displayed the consiste false-color all around him, and the waldo - which

doubled as an environment suit, and therefore did not interfere

with his breathing system — was reporting the encors methans as a sally tast 6 around, there had been no one that hismed in blame. He'd hen no driving past a little too slowly, trying to sure below while fulling the mess tasks, and a sperictive ordinary but rendom and quite unpredictable drop in the density of the ringer current had read the impact spoul another by the principle of the property of the property

No point thinking about that,
"What happoned, Sarge? Or shouldn't I ask?" Barn
laser, Belvow's co-sanker and watch ourtner, didn't bother to

inger derived a coverage of the control of the cont

exploration crew than of Earth's remaining population were often touchy.

"I rode too close to stall. It's all right now," Belvew answerd.

"Use anything from the times?" "Nothing to use. There was enough room to dive-start." Belvew did not mention just how little space altitude he had had and Inger didn't ask.

You to still over Carron, som't you't feet could been performed to the could be the could be the could be the portion and taked by feet the feet in the could be you then without councies thought. Both keen specific, with great years on the bould had been as do so home predict with the councies of the councies of the councies of the You was not have the fourth by about date." Believe was not been deep the performance of the councies of which the time. He wanted mass in his tricks as toom so provided by the performance of the councies of provided by the councies of the councies of provided by the councies of provided by the councies of the councies the councies the councies the councies the councies

making several passes through it fast enough to avoid another ram stall but slow enough to except turbulence damage to but 'Inst about,' he answered at last. "I still have enough cans to finish Four and most of Five. I hope all the ones I've dropped so far work. I'd hate to have to go hack sust to make replacements. There's too much else to do " He fell silent again as the waldo began pressing his hody at various points indicating that Occasio was entering turbulence. His fungers, shoulders, knees, and toes exerted delicate exessure- new this way, now that- on the suit's lining, answering the thumps he could feel and forestalling the ones the Astoff screen was letting him anticipate by sight. For nearly two minutes the arroratt rounced its way through the vertical currents, and as the torbulence eased off and the sar around his viewers cleared the pilot gave a happy grunt. He would have nodded his head in satisfaction, but that would have operated too many inappropriate controls

"A respectable hite. Nine or ten more runs at this height should give me takeoff or orbit mass."
"Or several dozon stall recoveries," his official buddy couldn't help adding. Belyew let the remark in, and two or three minutes passed furious aground celes agole. The rest of the team hand their own instruments and could read for themselves to the rise of tank levels as the poly "collection scoop polyped Transan are, controllaged the hydrocarbon fog droplets out off, a tened the liquid, and returned the meanly pure nitrogen to the atmosphere. "I have 'ey's another odd surface putch a few kilos west of

Carver, "Maria Collos" voice came at length, as the main tinfor neared the seven teaths mark. "It wouldn't take you very far off plan to look at at hefore you start Log Five." "Like the earlier ones, or something really new?" asked

"Life the earlier ones, or something really new?" asked Belven.
"Can't tell for sure in long waves. It could be just another but of milited tar. Even if that's all, we're gotting

enough of those to not explanation."
"One would meet explanation." exapped Arthur Goodell,
the least patient of the group wouldy, and excessibly because of
the midden pane of Synapse Amplifications Synahome. "I can
see — so can you — how that would settle out of the art so date
at this temperature. I can see date getting pole of the date of the
art that the present of the part of the part of the
in the three kilds currently that pass for gainst lone. I can not
lead to be a subject to the pass of the pass of the
I don't see as what on this yellul could ever meet in. What
I don't see as what on this yellul could ever meet in.

Two suggested methane rain, dissolving rather than melting the surface of a dane as it scokes in and forming a crust as it evaporates, "came the much milder and thanner votce of lookemin case Grigor Xal-a.

"And I've suggested hashing and findings out first hash whether those into, amount, shown hillions are the thru shells of composite ever a dame, as you've in mightings are the time the second of the

If a not a mother of set policy. Solvow registed as middly as he could—be not had no own towholes, even of they dath of middle SAS. "Avoiding rank to the jets before the sortion and the SAS." In the second to the

same place and we know what to expect."

Not exactly. The original sheft was gone."

"The arm was plass Titanian durt, with no chif to fall down this time. Even I could probably have set down afely."

No one contradicted this blatant exaggeration. "The cld saw about dead heroes."

"Doesn't apply, Arthur." Mana, somehow, was the only one of the group who could manage to interrup people without according made. "We're a aleasyl heroes. We' be here hold for." There might or might not have been secrasm in her time. No one else, even Goodell, speck for a moment. Then Beltwen formed back to the leading quantities.
"There's no reason is shouldn't make a ground chick

after finishing the Leg Four, if Maria's radar and my own

## Harsh Mistress SFA

eyesight can find me a lauding and takeoff site. Actually, we full as currous and rathout the mooth suffi, and it's good lattice to eliminate possibilities as early as we can. Let me the off these tarks just to play usin, and fine you can put me back you can put to be provided to the provided site. The second of the second of the provided site of the provided site

his remaining passes through the thruséchead with no actual stalls. There were no remarks about his two close calls, either, overyone had flows the renigits at one time or another emorie Goodell, whose no mores were devoted in paint no micro for the time to be him use a body stallo, and Piers Martinea, whose the distribution of the contract of the contract of the bed dying of oundering, had sever been good modely the pictoting. All know the ordinary problemas of flying "Standard term left from Frey point free." Means and

probing. All know the ordinary problems of Symp.

Standard term left from Fry openet free. \*\*March

Standard term left from Fry openet free. \*\*March

"Left four five point free," he acknowledged, hashing

"Left four five point free," he acknowledged, hashing

promptly to serverly-four degrees. The group had established a
half-Barth gravity as a "standard" coordinated farm on Tilan.

The rampte's warm, grathey as they were, could still give that

much lift at rans speed believe the hitematers or a skittled. He

much first a rans speed when the hitematers or or altitude. He

must be a new the standard on the harden and meters for

must consider the standard on the harden and meters for

mission open which are openantly standard one minimed metalers. Second when nothing else was demanded by circumsetting as second when nothing else was demanded by circumsetting as four heading is good. You'll resuch the heading to down to as to reach three headend maters at that time. I've allowed for the speed microses of your present power setting, so don't change if. On my time call, level off and do a standard right term of one severally seven point three. Start deopping cama at standard intervals ten seconds after you timeth the time. The

at datafact intervals ten seconds after you trinsh the time. The leg ends at the brenty-second can:

"Got at." Belyew remembered again, with the sid of the bleat needle mounted in this suit under his chin, not to mod. There were no more words until the time call, and no more after it must like hast of the pennel shaped and sated "cass"—contained for the suit has been described by the standard street of the standard and other year — needed for the fourth lee of the elament.

sessmic network had been ejected. 'Okay, Maria, take my hand," Belyew nosed the set upward as he spoke. All the others were listening and watching as their particular instruments allowed except Goodell, who was meticulously testing the output of each of the recently dropped cans. None interrupted the terse directions which formed the response to the relot's request, and he hartled northward along the eastern shore of Lake Curver eight hundred meters above its surface with his earphones still silent. He knew they could follow his progress on their deplicates of his own Astoff, and that he could expect to have his attention called to anything he seemed to be missing, so he concentrated on the screen area a third of the way from center to lower margin. This covered the region he would pass over in the next few seconds. It was only slightly distorted by the projection which let a single screen squeeze the full sphere into an ordinary human field of vision, though this mattered little; everyone had learned lone ago to correct in their own minds even for the extreme warping at the edges. No part of the strength itself showed: though some of the two dozen cameras mounted in various parts of its skin did have wing, nose, or tail in their fields, the computer which blended their images on the

The board surface was currently elass-smooth ahead and

single fell-sphere display deleted these.

Unfortunately

left of the jet, though even Titanan winds could rase waves gravity was weak and legal density low, and the lighest wind occurred over the lakes themselves where evaporation Jowered the air dismitty far more than temperature changes could be belvest gave the lake only an occasional glance, leeping his mains attention on the land ahrand where the patch to be examined should be.

"Three minutes," came Mora's must wore. The others

Three minutes, "came Maria's quiet voice. The others remained silent, "Two, You might be able to see it anow," The pilot scanned through his vision frequencies again, designed the longer wave lengths which were more strongly absorbed by mechane.

"I cam, I think, Forgat triming, I'm slowing to tun meters above stall—no, make that twenty for the first run — and going down to a hundred materia, and I'm cotting or other random.

comes to a relation: Eastless, and it is considered out the colorion analyst an we can cut my shift there later. I'll recover. The art looks steady, but I don't wast another stall at this height.

No one objected aloud, though there must have been mental enervations. Between was the pilot for now; it was up too him to weath relative risks to the accraft. Negative commends would have been distracting, and therefore.

The smooth push gives clearer as the second reason. If

was larger than most, about half a kilometer across, roughly circular but with four or free extensions reaching out another hundred or bundred and fifty motion at irregular points around as circumference. It might have been an oversized amoubt is far as outline went. The color seemed to be besteally black, though a reflected the pale reddish-carage of the Titunian high same as athough from glass.

No small details could be made out from the present aliantie and speed. Gone branked to a much less than standard turn rate for this speed, swung m a wide, slow circle north of the patch, and made a second pass in the opposite directions. This time the reflection of the brighter section of southern sky where the sum was hiding could be made out the surface where the sum was hiding could be made out the surface others on her map, but there were still no informative details. He made two more runs, this time at thray maters above

others on her map, but there were still no mfocmative details.

He made two more runs, this time at then'y matter above
the highest point of the patch and only two motives per accorda
above regressing, times and ready to shift in rocked in mode — to
use this matters and send highest and setted. Best into the proper of
using stalling core those stalley structures had plenty of lift
area in this atmosphere and gravity, and the jet lend bean
designed so that they would go out at higher aimpred than any

control surfaces.

Neverthaless, his attention was enough on his aircraft
and far snough from the ground so that it was Barn who
spotted the irregularity.

There's hollow shout ten maters arrow helf was from

and are enough from me ground so that it was nare was spotlard the irregulatity. "Dere's a hollow about ten motors across half way from the high pount to the base of that northwest arm. It did framy things to the jet's reflection as we passed this time, but I can't see at now. I can't decide exactify how deep it is, but it's just is

dent, not a real hole."
Dal surpress else spot st?" asked Belvew. Most of them had, but none could give any botter description. The pilo made smother pass, this time devoting a dangerous amount of this attention to the surface below, and saw the festero for himself, but he could make out no more details than the other. "You know we're proping to have to land sometime,"

Goodell said in what was meant to be a thoughtful tone.
"I know." Belvew was thinking too. There was half a

muruse's pouse before the remote-lab manager tried again.

What time is bettier than now!" The pilet could seawer that one.

"When we know more about the strength of that sealing it is not a crust, as the rain theory mercents. Occorus could

If it's just a creat, as the rain theory suggests, Geometric could break through and smother the jet scope in dust, or mad, or dirt, or whatever form the stiff under it lauppers to have." You have pleasly of cans. See what happens when one of them this. You needs' two its church, let it hit as hard as

Titus can suke it.

"Good shea." The pilot, with much relief, castcourly
crosed shea. "The pilot, with much relief, castcourly
could mike the pipe frontfirm—and climbed to a full disease;
here was relin ownis, but the public was a hariset target thin
he had undispited. Without its pinechnic the sinder contains
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of followed it with other measurement wall in bessel sind in the years
of the pilot the pilot the pilot the pilot the years
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of the pilot the pilot the pilot the pilot the years
of the pilot the pi

motors beyond the edge of the glassy patch.
The second try, with Barn calling the release memera,
was much before and quade informative in its way. The cash,
was much before and quade informative in its way. The cash
conding passive measurements, but Maria's shortest viewing
waves showed that the little machine, solid as it was, had
hattered on constant. This surface aemond pretty steengshowed to face the state of the surface of the property of the contraction of the surface of

weak to take the jet's weight, much less the impact of a poor landing just here and new.

As it was, the next test appeared to be up to hum. He thought furiously. Would anything except an actual landing test liftern what they needed to know!

The jet lacked landing gear in any ordinary sense; there were no wheele, floate, or real skight. Its helly was shaped into

a double local meant to give it cutamment stability in an attempted loquid untiling and brood support on dubroodsy shad surfaces, though once stopped the body would sink to conclining like these quarters of its dismaster in the basis guess conceiving the tree quarter of its dismaster in the basis guess mechane. This was why no one wanted to make the first leave mechane. This was why no one wanted to make the first leave landing; it had not occurred to aspire until much the barrier to calcidate, much less test, the results of attempting a recell the control of the contro

The keels were adoquate landing slide on a solid surface, one could make a pass at just above wing stalling speed, grazing the apparently smooth hump. If he did it right, he might resolve the question of whether the patch was solid or creats. If the latter, of course, there would be no certainey about its ultimate strength until the jet came to a stop and the wings lock all their file.

tost all their lift.

The convexity of the surface complicated the problem slightly. If he hit too hard, easy to do on the upslope side, the question of whether the crust was stronger than the jet's belly and loads would also become relevant.

and keels would also become relevant.

The initial landing, Earth days before, had been on a smooth their of ice near the foot of the steep side of what looked like a tilled block mountain; Than seemed still active tectoscially. There had been no trouble anticipated us detail, being the count in pilet — lings, at that time — had larget alert tarted at the standard state of the standard shock cond in the ice which chased they it tutted a thermal-shock cond in the ice which chased they it most of its limiting table. The pilet had just managed to accord

riding to the food of the hill on several million tons of detached high a final, quark shot of threat. The three bosts it had taken for the factory god to chimb to the bottom, got to a safe distance from the daff free and the new pile of see pubble down roots and start growing had been agent in a high state of tension. Not just by linger. When it somed certain that no more peaks would have to

be read out, the fact that only a short length of ice shell manuscule for shelf-that love faced, length and been forced to a manuscule for shelf-that love faced, length and been forced to a situation singular sheaf, the rest of the group worksheld another cruck cheate has along the shelf, and once our robble of the beams, and roll troud the new factory. There was no longer to be a shelf-that the shelf-that the shelf-that the shelf-that the beams, and roll troud the new factory. There was no longer to be later discussed to pack up casin, some the factory show mattered, had been on "ordinary" ground and proved mattered, had been on "ordinary" ground and proved mattered had been on "ordinary" ground and proved mattered had been on "ordinary" around any provided matter than the shelf-that the shelf-that the shelf-that the strength of the shelf-that the designetion and the absorption takes for his provided as the dangerous, and the absorption takes for his provided as the dangerous, and the absorption takes for his provided as the dangerous, and the absorption takes for his provided as the dangerous, and the absorption takes for his provided as the dangerous, and the absorption takes for his provided as the dangerous, and the absorption takes for the dangerous and the dangerous and the absorptio

had been hope of membered the ice landing vividity as he believe remembered the ice landing vividity as he planned his process one. Some dangers were more foreseesable this time, but there was the chance that concentrating on those much lesses has readment to restored to somethine underesseen

magar rasten has reasonates to respond to sententing unaversescens as promptly as his frame had done.

Well, These and Creas were still available at the orbiting station, and the chance had to be taken sometime. No one would blame him for lossing Overner.

At heart not alread.

He called for a wind check — even a few kilometers an hour could make a difference — and held a constant heading for the inkinenters while lager adjusted a superimposed girl on his own screen's image. Eventually the moving ground features followed up of the lines and let him to their apparent meltion. "Only one point seven, from eighty soven," was the

vendict. Belvew swept out over the lake without asking Maria for a heading, fined up with the patch from a dozen kilometers to the west, and eased back on his newer. He nosed up or our to split the result between descent and speed loss, and reached the shore fifty meters above the liquid and a scant two meters a second above ram stall. Chewing his lower lip, which fortunately affected no waldo controls, he closed the ram intakes and fed the liquid to the plasma arcs. There was a grant of admiration which might have come from Goodell; the shift to rocket mode was almost perfectly smooth. The longstudinal accelerometer swung promptly to a negative reading, and stayed there as Belvew turned down his fires ever more. He was approaching wing stall now, and began increasing the camber of his lifting surfaces toward the barrolsection shape which had been used so few times before, and never by him. He should, he suddenly realized, have done a few practice stalls two or three kilometers higher. He convenced homself quickly that breaking off the approach and

going up to do this now was not really necessary but didn't ask for anyone else's opinion.

The ripplied dust was fifty meters down -- forty --

The glassy convexity locuted ahead, riving to meet his keals. He noted up even more, killing descent briefly while airspeed certimed to shop. The bulge kept riving toward him. Without orders, laper hegan calling speed. The wings should maintain fift down to sixteen meters per second, Believe knew, and the stall then should be smooth. Some trevial of theory.

were pretty solidly established.
"Twenty-two zero -- twenty-one nine -- twenty-one

"wenty-two zero - eventy-the nine - twenty-the cight...

The keels were two matters from the bulge, and he need up still farther to keep them so as the sampeed continued to full. That wouldn't work much farther; past the top of the dome he'd have to deep the mose to make contact before still, and that would speed him up. Not much in Thin's gravity, but any would complicate the ministery.

The sale edges of his screen, representing the year to here, dericted unddenly, but he kept his sitemation sheed. If there was anything really important aft, emmons would will him, though he hoped they would her before he was stopped. For an instant he washed he were actually radang the jate, to fall.

But be ken wan year. The scoolerometre and three burnar voices supplied the knowledge simultaneously. He stopped reaction mass flow and quenched the plasma fires stopped and the stopped freation mass flow and quenched the plasma fires

we we knew any wey. The deconcentioner and any between the common ways and the control of the control stronger reaction mass flow and quantional the plasma fares power on one side or the other of a reverse developed. Any young could roll fin Occume onto its back, and it seemed not unlikely that whichever wing was undermeath could take such treatment. "You're down!" came Ginner's voice, this time secretals.

such treatment.

"You're down!" came Ginger's voice, this time separate
from the others. Belvew sacrted faintly, and spared enough of
his abtaint to tutter a his of doggered which had survived in
various forms from the time of histor-covered unrealt.

A basic rule of fliers, and all who've ever hopped: a
ship is nowe, handed until it is mally dround?

But deceleration was now rapid as the keel friction made itself folt, and a quarter minute inter the listing was complete. Belvew know be westlin't feel it, but his stomach tightened up anyway for soveral more seconds as be watched screen and

vertical motion maters for evidence that the slap was breaking firough a crust. Apparently it wasn't, and at last he felt free to let his attention focus on the view aft.

To screen darkening was from a devely spreading cloud of black sanks, its nearest edge well over a handred meters astern. It could not, the splick saw at once, have been produced by friction between his keels and the surface, his heising slide hold's started that far back, and he themsometers showed that he keels were at about a handred and fifty kelvans. They were cooling, but not so rapidly as in vaggest they had been been will be the surface of the

NOT that allyone reastly their west temperature I in a would take, be reflected flecting their prough in the statical tarting test hollow the near side of the smoke-cloud and tarting test hollow the near side of the smoke-cloud and confirmed that whatever had keepened to the surface had come before tours of the state of state of state of state st

from his papes.

The smoke was being borne very slowly away from him by the negligible wind. The trough, perhaps half a notice deep said tin or twelve wide, reinstaned uniform as the recoding cloud sweated more and more of it, extending down the slope of the convexity. The jet had come to nest almost exactly at the typ of the being it is seemed, both pitch had food laxes read within

a degree or so of horizontal.

"If it's a crust, if a pretty thick," Goodell remarked.

"Unless the jets melted their way down and j

"Unless the jets melted their way down and just produced more of it," rejouned Ginger.
"Could be." Being human, Goodell liked his own idea better, being a scientist of rank, he knew that alternative appendence, however unifitiely, should always be developed as any a possible in bepe of maintaining objectively. Let's get angles.

Believe had powered down the flight controls, except for those which impair be needed for emergency takenly, and could natively nod his bead, not that anyone could see him from these quaranties connectioners.

"All right, in a few minutes. Non-destructive cummatuse first. I assume overplain in aght's been recorded, now left shed."

It is supported to the second of the second of the second of the clear. Below actuated the short focus coware on the lower part of his fusility, and allowed their mages to that cover the hard forms as his friends show close—in, all that cover the hard forms as his friends show close—in, all present the second of the second of the second of the real engroundings remander must be due. No can, however, and anything the second instance has energied obtains not every magnification soulable and at every point the name whole has the curve of the full adapt, even though the

were boding from its top, and the nearest point of the track presentably such by the calcular was too obtained for a cubil procedule. The contract of the calcular was too obtained for a cubic procedule. The contract of the contract. The object which dropped from between the keels may distant have been an engl quidapple not of the surface table. The distant have been an engl quidapple not of the surface table, and distant have been an engl quidapple not of the surface table, and distant have been an engl quidapple not on the surface table, and distant have been an engl quidapple not not the surface table, and distant have been an engl quidapple not not the surface table. The distant have been an engl quidapple not the surface table to the distant have been an engl quidapple not the surface table to the supposed to distant have been a surface to the surface of the surface procedule of the surface table table to the surface of the surface table to the surface table table table to the surface of the surface table t

digging appuratus, coring tools, and locomotion conjuguest.
Stretcherily and functionally, it stradified the accepted arbitrary horderline between nanotoch equipment and pseudoliejs; it had bong grown like the case, not measurfactured, and much of its instead squipment was of molecular size.

"Take at, Art. Where 10":
"Ant, I'd say I'll sample at each moter until we reach the chance to an old fluen raishly day. The sendlers report rooky."

unbased trail, and then really day. The smellers super ready.

The "mellers" were of course the analytical equipment, and everyone began to tense up again as the egg grawled to its first sampling point and scraped up a speciment. "How hard?" queried several votoes at once.

"About three. If it is a orust, it must be eresty thick to

take Occasion" weight."
"Composition?" This answer was slower in coming,
naturally, but overall percentages were roady in less than a
minute.
"Confine fifteen point seven one sideogen confinere point."

matture. Carbon fifteen point seven one; nitrogen eighteen point engle eight hydrogen four point one one; oxygen twenty-eight point two five; phosphorus - " engle or engod. The first three species had all been observed in samples of the three species had all been observed in samples of the

there species had all been observed in samples of the samoughers same, and there was pointing surprong about the oxygen, since water ice had been seen; but this was the first seciencing pass the second period to be detected on Time. It was also something more hoped than expected. Study of perhasticar substances had high missing portrol, but no one perhasticar substances had high missing portrol, but no one over the new pritly centum teclome activity might not bring even the new pritly centum teclome activity might not bring material from very dops in the satisfits. That would depend on the still unknown came of the activity.

Regardloss of the fact that only two thirds of the sample
mass had been accounted for, Ginger Xalco called out
emphasically. Structure, for goodnoor vision.

No one suggested that the elemental analysis be finished
first, certainly not Goodful, who maght have pulled rank if the
had chosen, but who whard ber feelings. He set appropriate
mernal muchancy to work while the like existed on to its next

meternal machinery to work white the lab cassifed on to the next sample site, and its next, and its next.

"It's a gol, really," he said at last. "The solvent - perdon to dispersing agent - is methined. Most of the next of the material seems to be polymers of one sort or another. Some of it's cardebydrates, a lot has nitrogen, but it's going to take a while to find whether we're dealing with what we d consider moving the solution of the same antique notice we are."

Left or right<sup>11</sup> shool Collos and Martinea topodor.

"You'll have to wait versa longer for that almore than a minute." Ingre on its. "Does at the top of the colposition between the collection of the collec

several continuetes, and Below slowly increased the thract. Then his landscope validarly jurical backward, and a moment later Occurate was anticory underly jurical backward, and an amount later Occurate was anticory of the Constitution of Coccidil gives an indigate. The plot page to asstancing the moment, as he concentrated on reaching raw speed as quickly as possible while using a minimum of mass; it was larger who arrowered the complaint.

The plants of the constitution of the continue o

way?"

"No, And we don't have the sample, either."
Inger posifered for a moment, then suggested, "Maybe we can find it. The lish should have held up; the otherst cools pretty quickly, and we I have been getting the data by beam to the plane. That would have been flavour off line. Order it to the plane. That would have been flavour off line. Order it to track; may be we can get its signals."

"What if a washed the liste? It must have been follown.

track; may be we cange at no agains:

track; may be we cange at no agains.

If the trave;

So much the hetter. We could use a reading on the
composition of that june. If it is not place cortian, it is that it is
different from what we take from the clouds. Look at the
total control of the control of the clouds. Look at the
total control of the control of the control of the control

The answer was a grant which might have means
anything. Burn's instruments, however, showed that Goodal

he was withing more quagly for resimption of data filter or of a
chance to go on complaining was anyton's green.

Gine had been betavaing; even with the attacksion on

Gene had been listening, even with his attention on piloting in optio of his sympashy for Goodell's feelings, he went up to a little over one kinemeter, steered out over the lake to find a cumulus clored and replaced the reaction mass he had just used. Then he mercased firmst and noned down—he was actually as impacted as any of the others, and more optimistic than most of from—and hasded back toward above and foremer landing site. He was down to fuffy meters by the time the glassy path thowest about.

He cut back threat and allowed the jet to slow to mattall-juba-tenety, and made fore passes over the area at that speed, first following and thus penallshing the line of the active landing and takeoff.

No again registered. With a gim expression which no one could sea, and some muttered remarks which to took case.

one could not, and form mattered cruecks which be took ocmands, and work their took could not be the two more practical translates, and were their to rook made, but two more practical a base filters mattered skinds and put above were stud-ordered whatever they might than of hour freeze adaptament—rull produced on squade. The list had not four the restricted, though produced on squade. The list had not been restricted, though produced on squade. The list had not been proposed in part produced on squade. The list had not been proposed in the squade to be part and one of the processing the proposed mode one great depth cortainly would. These was a temperature of the produced of the produced proposed in part and the produced of the produced produced to the proteating the produced produced to the produced of the mode one part of parts or the produced to the proteating the produced produced to the produced to the four parts of the produced to the produced to the proteating the produced to the proteating the produced to the produced

returned to rampet mode whos speed sufficed, and began it chindways from the arm. That hopes too, but I guess we've lost it. Here you are also solut could produce a gol bear? "Why?" restored Belvew. "The makings are all there is and mediance could be it flexible, with relation of by dispose and mediance could be it flexible, with relation of by dispose are actually been, if you finish the reaction would go too rismly at minet; K.".

"Snagby, nampby!" cut in Maria. "Catalyse woulder belg. That's endothermic to the time of over a bundred bibloomles." For a moment Gene felt an impulse to kisk immed! He know the woman bade't bad that datum in her bead, but be, too, could have called it up before making himself sound silly. Then he saw a way out. "The unergy could come from local heat," he said, tyung the beat way to the same memorage cut off his visue."

to keep stangmest out of his verte.

"At most, kolvand"

"At most, kolvand"

"At most, kolvand"

"At the stand of the control of the control

"Or in or just under a lake, "Ginger our in. "We'll have to look for bubbles." In ordinary temperatures," Belvew finished. "All right, we'll look. Do some planning, you types with imaginations. I'm going to hat Line Five. Give me The fifth planned seimer rang was a quarter of the way around Titan from Lake Carves, ten or eleven homes flight at standard get speed and over two even at full thrust in the

The first planned actimic array was a quarter of the voly around Thin from Labor Curve, in one of ever house. High it was to the contract of the contract of the contract thannes are time of kilomaters up. Belows set verything to a statement, termed his waster over to dame, and deciding to a standard property of the contract of the contract of the might have good through the labor castally, but he might have good through the labor castally, but he who did. Brelation of disease organisms had gotter further all farther shaded of mischal research several down, coursing new variations of older ailments such as leukumia, were new on the list of mayer health problems. Four of these swodyed streikly, three of them in women. Earth's human population had actually halved in the last four decades, and the average age was briefly twenty years in spite of, or because of, the species' usual reaction to any major them!. Sur restand exclusions among the entacked survivers

were legion; stifatectory ones nonexistent. Even upper authorized to the proposition with a general matter had not fail but on Nonchaus-flood-type divine weeds at general materialms each ten a position and other causal organism had been admitted beyond reasonable doubt, but the information had not yet produced to the proposition of th

of so many almost at once was merely a statistical event like a baseball batting slump or winning streak. Belvew, who liked people, preferred the latter sides, but was too good a scientist to feel sure of it. CPRS, the almost which would finish terrine his own hones to something like

seguited china in another two or three years, would have laken only a little managination to produce from a scremal historia. Service of the statistical for feel interactive, certificial, certificial post the whole certificial certificial certificial certificial feel managination and contracted hassenform the same front servicing two, the flowed back to his own cell and appendixed in vision that is support effective with emchanged, cleaned, and otherwise readed for further use. The units were not full-recycling, indeferringly latting affirm for the hall board designed feel front is recommend, became and life compact acquirity disregal offer final vision managing the report approximation of the production of the compact acquirity disregal feel final vision managing the remaining the remaining the remaining of the comments.

and also for perhaps twenty mon.

Calcjump-phosphorus recryptalization syndrome also,

Calcjump-phosphorus recryptalization syndrome also,

which obbling him of energy, lesp him from sineigning for very

resched the piramed side of the sent sense energy. There was

morbing to do but works becomey and, of cueses, hypothesize on

the connec of the variety features. He could not frequention and the

concept from this height, name he could not frequention while to

were field; monitories and rift valleys; frees were licked monitories and rift valleys; then were licked monitories of rift valleys of the second rift of the second rift valleys; and the same of the observation are as well as the covering of nurby

all the many or loss observated uses, might be the hypothesis.

all the stores or less horizontal area, might he the hypothetical tee draft the factory had been planted on such a startoe, but at the time no analysts had been possible. Neither cans now lish all yet been gown planted to the control of the case of the comment of the lakes was large enough to be called an order, as mapping from orbit had made clear enough, or the control of the control of the called and the outer of the called the called the called the called the outer of the called the called the called the called the carrier, about the area of Earth's Lake Victoria, down to

publies. The Cellos Pathes were midder as numerous nor as stays, but far from rate.

The locations of the lakes were to some autent controlled by temperature, of connec water in a maques begain, but not in its tradency in fixed downlift. Nobedly, nowever, had yet format any order or some in the stay, because, the stay of the rate of the property of the control of the stay of the stay of the trying to organize patterns out of those he passed over. He reached his surger area without coming up with a rayther more moningful flux considilations.

Mass, who find also sleep, wared that it was turn to all and sleep, was off that it was turn to all and state of the sleep of the

Any known danger, he ruminded himself. Any known danger encept indistribying too closely with the siterraft, which the interruptions were intended to prevent. He brought his attention back to the job as Misria began issuing more specified directions.

directions. He had lined up on coarse, reached standard speed and delivery althintie, and released the first dozen of the Line Season when an interruption came from a worce no cone had been for works. It had amoranced them that the hast of the extractions which kept the estation in potential instant contact with all off that is surface was properly adjusted as notice, and cleared the came to get the action project under way. They had cleared the cores to get the actional project under way. They had

month forgotion it muss.

There is a change in map detail at the factory site. Please ovaluate. The speaker was Status, the data handler deducated to constant rechecking of the surface, the orbits of the status mad relay units, the operation of the closed-cycle like support systems, and the current medical condition of each of the applicages. Its amontmoment automatically put Maria, proposed feel few surface mapping, and heary or change. A would, the video

with which the maponded was claim.

"Gean, you're on mack. You still have forty-foor cance. As well as the second of the second

wish every frequency as her command.

"The change," she resumed at last, "seems to be the appearance of another of our glassy patches. Its texture is identical with the others, as far as I can tell. It is almost perfectly circulae, just over twenty meters across, and its corber is one hundred-forty four meters from the opening of the factor's residence port and directly in time with that opening.

that is, directly north. Attanuth zero."
"How long dult it that to reach that size?" actod Goodell.
"Can Status tell us when the last check of the site was make."
And are there enough observations to tell whether it appeared
all at once or grow from a centur?"
"Less than four home, yoe, and no," replied the mapper."

"Less than four hours, yes, and no," reploed the mispect.

That's the time of the last check, and there was no says of the
paths then. Does fine factory isself have any dea2".

"Fraid not. It's been making twenty cans and one lab an
hour and paying no attention to above ground surroundings.

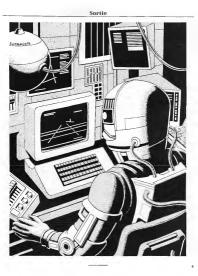
hour and paying no attention to above ground surroundings since gengened.

Everyone was hearing this exchange, of course, and Selvew out in without allowing his eyes to leave his screen.

"Above ground? But how about helow? Do any of its

roots go toward the patch?"

8



Goodell was silent for some seconds, and finally answerd in a rather embarased and supprised time. If call' tell. Roots went out in all directions, of course, and I can tell pretty much what materials have been coming in through each major one, but we nove thought of needing to know just which should direction any one root was taking.

There must have been a spectrum of reactions to this amount contain, but neither laughter nor anyer was suitable. The jet opered sweral more case before its pilet could think of another useful question.

"The root which went east, toward the cliff, would be

picking up water sooner or-well, sooner. The factory couldn't have started production without oxygen. Does any one of them show a reher water take than the others?"

"Yee. Much richer. Number 12."
"Then it's a reasonable guess that that one went toward
the moratism, which seems to be a block of ion. Whichever is
ninety degrees counterclockwise from Twelve must be pretty
close to under the new peach, right!"

"Right. Unfortunately—"
"Unfortunately "Ou mean you don't know the selative
directions oilshe?"
"No. I don't know whether the numbers go one way or
the other, or even if the numbers see in order. I labelled them
as they started to pick up are material. Sorry. Penn if we'd
wanted is, there was no other way to distinguish that."
"So there one are chance of sandyname that each with

the factory."

"I'm afraid so:
"So I go back and plant more labs around the factory."
"You do phe rest of your came first," Marsa cut in. "It won't make much difference in time. You'll be a couple of hour potting below, and if a where you'd be going anywar for more came. There's no reason to beligne sheen's any learn; we could be watering that the property of the couple of the property of the does."

"There could be need if the factory stelf has anything to do wit is appearance, Goodell pointed out. Belvew started to say something but Maria was fast.

We'll worry about that if it seems in order. I'll woth how fast, and which way if any special one, this thing grows. I'll doos. Art, keep really close tabs on the factory's behaviour, that's the only other thing I can think of which might let us

know of any such connection. Any other ideas?" "Five cars to go," Belvew answered, with no obvious relevance. "What was that return heading again?" Maria told him, and he finished his run in silence. He then climbed to compromise beight-air thin enough for low resistance while still dense enough for the ramiets-eased in full thrust, took up the Great Circle heading back to the factory, set Oceanus on automatic control, and shefted his screen to the instruments being used by Art, Maria, and the others. There would be no verticals at this height, and he refused to worry over unknown dangers, especially when Barn was also watching. On top of everything also, as for as his own attitude went, whele scientific/military procedure was of course. an important and sometimes even a life-and-death matter. freedom to pay attention to a problem was equally so. The usual rank distinction between theorists and more observers was absent here. The smooth patches might not be a military or any other kind of risk, but they now involved a hasp: situation change near the only equipment source currently on Titan-one which would take days at least to replace, if they

did bave to plant a new factory-and the more mends engaged

on the problem the better.

Barn larger felt just the same, and he couldn't see the
jet's wings entry light at the factory site, and would be for
several more Earth days. The attentit was on the night sade,
though Belives expected to see the fuzzy, reddened hird of the
memmels of the samey was still above list—in mother few.

sur-man, and the fact laming was trust according to the contion. States, to see the big date, priced by the needle of its edge-on rings, ber'd have had to shirt to a real-surrounding week. Even that implies that work, muce the states naturally spent over a third of the time in Third's Satem-shadow, and spent over a third of the time in Third's Satem-shadow, and usually nateline he nor any of the others frow just where they were in in order. That was something for States to keep truck. We have the continuous surface of the continuous states of the Even by day, visible light was no use for extensioning the

cf.
Even by day, visible light was no use for examining the factor from above the atmosphere, much longer waves were reading from above the atmosphere, much longer waves were reading from a least as few kilometon of other towerful tool examined into single "pictures" by the data processors. Murra cound not, equite, whath the earlines image loolegy in real forme. By nowe, if had occurred to everyone in the group how size it would have been to pround the factory with a carrier, but no one mentioned this islend. "If only," were against military, resimilie, and models discipation we will a common society.

exemblize, and moderal disciplific is well at contains noted; and of those demanded dealing with those pas they were, apparent Before Belvew could see the sun, Maria amounced that the patch was six commenters broaded on the cost-west lines and right on the north-south than it had been when first measured patch—so-have later both amounts had increased by unother for contaments, and the determine from the centred of the patch is "Suggested it is extendly moving, not just growing more "Suggested it is actually moving, not just growing more

one way than the other," Barn pointed out.
"Suggests I was wrong about its being caused by rain,"
was Mara's less enflusiastic comment.
"Are you sure? Would the factory report rain?" asked
Belvess.
"No, but my varwees would. It hasn't rained there since

we planted the rig. And I know min when I are it there's been plantly of it here and there on Titan. You ought to know, Gena."
"I do. It's always been from verticals either over the lakes or very close to them. The general winds see so slow that a thundersteen always due before it can set your far from the

lake that spawmed it.

"It seems to," was Goodell's more pessimistic word. 'In
any case, if all those things are gel like the one we started to
examine, you'd have to explain how liquid methane tensed into
methyl alcohol."

There was a sucception about that, and the factory is

examine, you d have to explain how signif methane turned into methyl alcohol." a suggestion about that, and the factory in close to an accounte, "Ginger pointed out." "So Gine close another list factory in the factory in "So Gine close another list factorial by the second be gets there."

"Or course," regind the pilot. "That "Il still be nearly as house though. Ameri there a good many ready at the factory? Why not get one of those on the job—or two or three, if that!" Prict, you're the strongest of us by a good deal. It unusual my rows, would you take the chance of a quick visit and into the "You can bold your heath long enough." If the pilot we have a second or the pilot of the winter and the sale of the winter and the sale of the winter and a you want of the mixing unsentable. It I come and there as long as you want

10

If will filely your lab work, but I don't use how it would, "Don't to be it in. I have a lab on the way. Gene." Cooked was obvously enthursased, as the others would have considered to be in the cooked was obvously enthursased, as the cooked was obvously the cooked was not be part of the part o

himself the only sinner.

The readings from the lowly travelling the bird veryon's class singles which my attend montant and everyon's class singles which my attend montant and everyon's class singles which is considered to the condition of the condition of the condition of the bird condition of the con

might even have fold. An office the mission of where it was until other has had touched alows, no one might ever have known about? In had touched alows, no one might even have known about? It was the mission of was all which is all the mission of was all which is all the mission of was all the mission of the mission of was all the mission of which will be the mission of the mission of was all the mission of was all the mission of which was the mission of was all the mission of which was the mission of was all the mission of was all the mission of was all the mission of the mission of

speed deepped to and below tons of metter per second.

The changing cambes applied by Below as wing stall approached may or may not have contributed to what finally happened. The operator's tany pitch and yaw conceitons as be maintained a straight and staudy descent also may have contributed, or may not. A trace of terbulinace in Titan's own air may even have been all that was needed.

Whatever the cause, the sharp white run on the front of the left wing solidenty fell or blew away from the slightly warmed surface, and the lift on that side, already more dependent on wing ares than on shape, despeed. It decreased only a little, but did it suddenly, and probably not even an automatic control could have done anything world at sich low attested. The wine, short as it was, muscle the ground with its tie.

and Accessed "nous whipped down and to the left. Bellow the life immulations have from predictably all his intellulence sensors. At the same instant pool of the central area of hea Albell was a basic and the manufacture of the central area of hea Albell was found to the control of the central area of hea Albell was found to the control of the central area of hea Albell was found to the control of the central area of hea Albell was found to the control of the central area of the central area of the control of the central area of the central

reached the same point on the logic route, though the milistance didn't always purson the same order. No ground camera views. No transport until, Sessments notice of finished. Weather tracers not even started. Labs are available only at their source, and something odd happening them.

them. Humanity as visually created species, and in secondinstalled and the second definition of the second second second second second definition of the second with read second secon

The jet's note was crempled back almost to the wings, the ground in hal need to despites hed ynitide way title. The left wing and run tipe were hidden under the fundage, Whose all pointed upward at about surfy degrees. The right weng and engine, also pointing upward but fees sharply, seemed mananened, but strange resolution was not yet down to single continued to the production of the production of the pro-So much for Occasions. Is Their ready? saked Goodall

Some and for Occasion. In Their ready? which Goodell family, "It shocks for out," same Garges a voice. "I think I as exert, and I've just dept and done my out.

"Are you willing to drive again, Gene?" Bolyow had been a summed. The crash was present contributed only a moment. The crash was present contributed only at moment. The crash was present contributed to the provided it, and the psychology behind the custom of a prior "String again as abone as possible after an accident was still value." Seen, I'm first be cought. If Juny, though, during the "Seen, I'm first be cought." If Juny, though, during the

Succ. I m recor shough. I m map, mough, during me perfight. Call me when she's ready, will you, Grogo?'
"Should I hurry?"
"No!" Goodel! was emphasie. "These hasn't been flown at all yet. Cover everything on the list, and anything else you make the I if May means to make the charge.

as any set. Cover everything on the pict, and anything else you can think of. If Maria reports some other change we may have to harry, but not unless or until."

"If Be good. Green media"t worsy."

"Who worring?" asked Belvew. He received no answer, and the decided in his suit. It accented unlikely that there would be time encough to get out of if for a real nay. This estimate, of

course, we haved on formeassbales, not human behavior. The station was far too massive for supone to feel the maximo when a person pushed off from or singued against a wail, but the department of the pit was noticed by everyone. It wail, but the department of the pit was noticed by everyone. Reactions differed. Goodell and one or two others wouldered measurability whitest they had been subgo and missed the end-of-checkoot report. Peter Martines make a wey face, so though sometimely to be described had happened in page of the hope-consulting to be affected that happened in page of the hope-consulting to the dispected that happened in page of the hope-consulting to the dispected that happened in page of the hope-consulting to the dispected that happened in page of the hope-consulting to the dispected that happened had happened to the page of the dispected that happened to the page of the dispected that happened that happened the dispected tha

"Ganger! Why?"
"My stair's fallost, and it'll save time."
"We don't need to save time!"
"How do you know? I cortainly don't!"

"My out was serviced almost as recently as yours," Believe tacity conceded the other argument. "It has nearly as much supplies:
"And I use less than three quarters the food and oxygen

"And I use less than three quarters the food and o you do. Stop being futile; I've already out speed."

Everyone by now understood the situation, but no one was tilly enough to suggest, much less order, that the woman return with the set. All relevant instruments showed that she had already killed enough of her station orbital speed to take the craft into atmosphere, and used most of the little reaction tuess in Theia's tanks to do so. Return was not possible until she had refilled on Titan

Nor was there any question of taking over from the robal even if this had been useful. Her waldo suit was in the space designed for it on the set, and any sort three had control months unless the wearer deliberately coded it. "Dead-man" override from outside was not possible; such a need bad not been foreseen until much too late. Construction and energy were extremely chean, but design was not people charged more beavily than ever for their skilled services. As a result, many structures and machines were produced with performance well short of ideal, and even the best usually turned out to lack something. The situation was not entirely new in history, but greatly aggregated by modern conditions

Even Goodell said nothing for general bearing. There was nothing useful to say for the moment, and what would be said later would never mention penalties, or violation of rules, or disobeying orders. Science, the search for understanding. had replaced much of the desire for personal territory. influence over others' hehavior, or glory which had motivated so many of burnanity's earlier high risk activities, but the moodfor-knowledge culture had not evolved along quite the same lines as the religious-economic-military one. Social awareness-idealism or natriotism, though now for the whole species-was fully as great in the new vaguely militarized ranks of science, and demanded as much team effort as war. but not the same prompt and blind submission to orders which the latter had had to evolve when the opponents were other

human beings rather than a universe with no nemonal survival VC21 Not quite so prompt and certainly not nearly so blind, but still involving risk. Ginzer knew exactly what she was doing. and why; so, in spite of his hasty question, did Gone and the others. Nothing critical was said during the bour and a balf Their took to much atmosphere and full her two infometer per second relative velocity; and even when she was flying rather than orbiting, payingtion sestractions from Mana and flying advice from the others made up most of the conversation The advice was not really needed, since Ginger had spent

as much time in simulators and roughly as much actually flying Oceanur as any of the others, but somehow those still in othit felt a need to keep meaningful conversation going-to "stay in touch. Xalco, after tanking up, deliberately landed at higher strend than flabrew had done, but there was no way yet to tail whether this made the difference. There slid to a stop half a kilometer west of the factory. She would have come closes but there were numerous objects on the surface between cliff tentatively identified by Maria's equipment as boulders of ice from the fallen shelf. One of Goodell's labs had confirmed that these senerate specimens were nearly pure water ice, with a trace of carbonate dust. A debate on why this was not silicate had taken up much time between the discovery and the jet's landing, but no conclusions had been reached except that the news had better get to those on Earth as soon as possible. No one knows in advance which will prove the key niece of a ugsaw puzzle, but the unexpected screams for attention

The landing approach bad not been directly over the

mystery patch, but the exhaust had melted or blown a shallow trough in the rurular surface and rassed a cloud of smoke apparently identical to that of Belvew's earlier landing. This had not happened before, when landing had been made to pack un cans and labs from the factory. Something seemed to have changed, though admittedly the other approaches had been along different tracks. Possibly the apparently proform areasuniform except for see blocks and the still prowing patchdiffered bere and there in composition. Goodell had all ripe labs now out and in action, and was sending out others as quickly as the factory completed them. Most, including Ginger, were listening to the analyses which Maria was numbering, tabulating, and locating on a map which usurped part of everyone's Astoff, and trying to make sense out of them. Belvew was the only exception. His attention was

The form of the crashed Oceanar showed a few hundred meters from her sister jet, much closer to the strange patch, and he was trying to see why it had fallen. If the cause were actually turbulence there would probably be no evidence, but he still found this hard to believe "Art, could you spare a lab to sample around the wreck?" be asked at length

"We'll get there pretty soon anyway. Any reason for special hastel "Well, Ginger landed hot, but there'll be a couple of seconds after left-off when she'll be as slow as I was. It might be worth at least a check. Maybe the ground was warmer or colder, for some reason and grow verticals." "How could st be?" The question, from Peter, was

ignored by all but Barn "We're looking for obemical action," he pointed out "and there's methyl alcohol to explain."

"All right," admitted Goodell. "Two labs on the way Tell me where you want your samples, Gene. Belvew went back to the view provided by Theia's eyes, and strained his own looking for noints of special interest or

and about the wreck. It would be a few minutes before the slow-moving labs mached the mot Several of Thrig's cameras covered the remains, and with Ginger's consent be had first one and then another of them feed the proper spots on the screen and process then images with interferometer routines, trying to produce the clearest possible view. For some time be concentrated on the ground ploughed up by Oceanut, but could detect nothing special, and finally shefted to the jet itself. The labs had arrived and without his specific instructions were starting to collect dirt samples before he saw the interrupted white rider sliong the leading edge of the uptilted right wing. Parts of it amegrally toward the tip, had not been shaken off by the cresh

He possied stout to the others "That shouldn't be these! How could I get wine to here? "How do you know it's ine?" asked Born mesonably

"I den't, but it's where you pick up ice in Earth's atmosphere, and it had the same effect."
"You're blaming it for what happened?" came Maria's quiet voice. "Well, not yet." Jumping to conclusions was one of the credinal sins. "Can you got a lab up there. Art?"

"I doubt st. They weren't designed to climb a smooth surface."
That skin's hardly smooth anymore."

"True. I'll try." He samted the words with action, and for

already."

over fifteen munutes seat one of his devoces rolling and classing was also approved an experience of the compiled functage. Each, sooner or later, narrowed enough to let the machine kepple back by the ground, untalmaged has inefficience. Goodell finally gave up. Belvew, less skilled but more waves, it red from some trues funnell, until most function was accounted to the control of the state o

"If there are, I can't see them," replied Belvew "I suppose we can just do lots and lots of tests all around the wreck, but how will we be sure that any offbest result can be blamed on the white stuff?"

d on the white stuff?"
"We can be quicker than that," Ganger assured them
"How?" asked Gene.

"I'll show you." Several of the Inteners guessed what was coming, best toget their months when there was nothing they could do about it, and objectively Xalco was being smart. She was connecting on the seat time. Those who failed in yould the implication from her words understood a few seconds bater as an environment sust with "GX" secretified from and back entered the field of view of the

"GX" sensulind front and back entered the heid of view of the view and the walk was unstantly, even Tristing less than fouriest precent of Earth growily was a kit more than any of the group back experienced for many menths. She made good opend, however, never actually fell, and reached the wreck was a standard or the sense of the sense of the sense of the "1 don't see anything what on the ground," the said. "It either fell off further back or got buried in the dirt Oceanus obsoubtful. Herr. Art." She medical to sum on only a short

distance to bring one glove against the rime on the wang. It stuck to her wast when she trised to set it down header the scarces like, and she had to shake it off, leaving some laguad on her palm. All watchers tried to draw informous while the labmit did its week. "Mostly ethylene, a trace of acetylene," Goodell imported travels after a memorit.

irrely after a monunt.

"Melting possible" Gene saked promptly, sure that Maras would have them on her cross at once. He was right, experted forms and 192 generatively, in the reported forms and 192 generatively, in the properties of the properties and only properties and only properties and properties are also as the properties and properties and properties are also as the properties and properties are also as the properties are also as the properties and properties are also as the properties are also as a properties are also as the properties are also as a properties a

moved min and out of the vasw belds the computer was using for Axoff projection.

"Why did we pick that up these two times, and not on any of the carbier bending?! And why pick at up at all, for that matter?" There can't much of either of those in the atmosphere." Gene was still puzzled.
"I think I can crosse," Barn said slowly. "You don't need

much that Can press, "state shall slowly," "con our traces much flash state, but it frentes on wrings if they're cold eneugh. Those landings are the only ones under so far right after the jet that open regulated them up at compromise abitude, and really get its wrings chilled. We can not that if when the contract of the contract of the contract of the abitude and the contract of the contract of the contract again." He did not suggest reprogramming the Autoff computer to show may. Knot of then could have done that computer to show may. Knot of then could have done that the contract of the You'd better come said we you've used as lot of gut time.

"I have plenty more. I'm poing to take a close look at the patch while I'm hare."

"I don't mean to be usealting, but you're budgeting time to fill your tends, I trust, 'Goodell interpreto-I am. But thanks for asking. Don't apologize." Her suited figure defended on the screens.

suited figure dwindled on the screens.

"The labs can do gas analyses, can't they?" She asked suddenly.
"Sum."

"Then hald; two better look for free hydrogen? Remember the

"Then hadn't we better look for froe hydrogen? Remember for site about the methanol production."
"We'd need water, too," pointed out Barn, Gingor kacked at one of the boulders, almost overbalancing in the weak gravey.
"These look this see," she assured him.

These are a checked them before, "growled Goodell
"If you want a report."

Those. That can want. I want to see the smooth stuff,"
Show. That can want. I want to see the smooth stuff,"
Showord a few gloding steps forther, and squatted down. As
he moved showly stoward the boulder, gualed from above, but

lab moved slowly foward the boulder, guided from above, but the editors said nothing aloud. Of course this would be too, too.

"Gryel" Came mingled voices. Ginger's suit had no camera.

"It looks and facia through my obsers fits black slave; in

"It tooks and feels through my gloves like black glace; it could still be the meltod the semente suggested. I can't sension it with a glove claw. Labs, please."
"Already three, as you should have noticed," answered Goodell. "Analysis so far matches the other one: it's a

metheso (gi) basically. In soil working on the polymers. He would be followed though Arthur (of all the group was the most openment; about finding probostic natural or Thina, and the most captert on autocardays and emithing betweening presentably provided with the obstrated evolution phenoments presentably provided with the obstrated evolution to the companions between the proper of the helioprical pages practice which he still lived, even if that prope of the helioprical pages practice which he still lived, even if that prope failed for provide cause the help perceival even for the perceival even for the perceival even from the perceivation of the perceival even from the perceival even from the perceival even from t

The screen brought Belvew's attention back from this brief wandering. Ginger had started to rise from her squatting position, and was putting on a rather grotesque show

She had been slightly off balance as the steaghtment lock haces and reached virtual out his recorder of pravity as little cotains the support area confined by her fact. There is a normal field that the support area confined by her fact. There is a normal field that the support area, then there is no park to put foct of searcest the discussion of full and movies in finite ran that derection to extend the support into the part of nor for a finite ran for the support area, thought not not be not not not not not trust that the support into the part of the support area. Then the support is not the support area for the support in the

developed "You've melted yourself int' ened Martucei. Inger,
whose does arevelved close contact between soles and surtose
plus Titan's high air pressure, saad nothing but thought
furpously. Goodell, already wondering how sample for
chemistry for a thermatropic reaction could possibly be, called.
See whether if pulling in a mound your book or, or five're was

## Harsh Mistress SFA

ranking!

Ginger Xalco was moved to answer thes. "Just surking! I'm stock, you shot! What do I do? "Find out why." Arthur replied calmly from the safety of a seven hundred killometer high orbit

"Try to tilt and slade one boot at a time," proffered linger "Can anyone mees how much jet exhaust a suit will take?" asked Belyew. "I assume no one knows."

While the women tried unsuccessfully to implement Barn's supposition, and then less enthusiastically to follow Goodell's instruction. Gens, already in his waldo sust, effently proflighted Their. Xalco bad filled the tanks conscientiously on the way down, and the landing had depleted them only a little: there was well over enough for a takeoff. Keeping careful watch on the gauges be fired up the plasma arcs and fed liquid to the pipes. Carefully checking the relative whereabouts of woman and factory, but not letting himself worry about a few labs, he raised thrust on the right jet enough to dese Their in a curving trail-the keels wouldn't let it samply proof-until it was beading toward Ginger. He then equalized both sides and sent the machine dragging forward until it was only fifty meters from the still anchored sust. Rather than atternet snother traffit turn he went on past. Jeaving Gineer on his left and turning only shristly to the right, until the exhaust

was streaming past her only three or four meters away. Better let me take it," the woman said at this point. "I can tell if it's too close, and the response will be quicket. Gene made no segument, and relinquished control Using waldo while standing up was more awkward than Conver had expected, and for a few seconds she was almost tempted to let Belvew take over again; but she resisted the

urge, recognizing the strength of her own arguments and possibly for other reasons The jet blast was now sweeping over part of the patch. behavior just as it had before: the tar, it that's what it was, was unking or possibly vaporizing into a shallow groove along the track of the warm was, while a dark cloud of smoke appeared

above the affected region and swigled and billowed slowly away from Them. Ginger examined as closely as she could the slow widening of the trench, and very carefully increased thrust on the left pape to swing the gas stream closer to her position. The hazher power widened the stream as wall as turning the jet, and she almost overdid it. The unspoken question in all minds was whether the removal of surface could be managed without cooking her sort. She finally stopped the turn by cutting back on the left unit and raising power in the other. Luckily this did

not provide enough total thrust to move the succraft farther away and complicate matters even farther I still can't tell whether it's vaporizing malting and sinking, or just crawling out of the way," she reported, her

voice once more calm. 'Is it crawling over your boots?" asked Goodell. Xaloo squatted once more "No," she replied after a moment. "It's more like

melting m. I'm deeper than before, but the stuff isn't closung in around me. You know, this might work "Damn!" said Arthur with feeling. Not even Ginger criticized. All watched tensely while the trench widened toward her and finally reached the left book. Here it seemed to stop, and after several impatient minutes she raised the thrust a

few percent "Your tanks are getting a but-" Gene didn't even try to finish the sentence. Ginzer answered only by trying, bard, to

slide ber boot toward the once more widening trench.

The material which had pressed up and outward like fairly stiff clay around the sole was vanishing; the screetted to watch closely, curiosity once again in the ascendant, as it blow away in a trail of smoke which she could clearly see forming from half a meter. She renorted verbally to the others "Can you move your foot?" cried Belvew. "Your tanks!"

She stood and pushed sidewise again, and ber left hoot shd out into the exhaust stream, suddenly free, She brought it next to the right one and prossed down hand at had after all taken a while for her to 'stick' earlier. She keet trying, shefting the position of the free boot every few seconds just in case, but the right one stayed firmly in place until the warm gas actually reached her armor and began to eddy around at. For several more seconds no one breathed.

much less speke; then the right foot came auddenly free, and Ginger made an unplanned but quite lengthy sump which took her off the smooth petch. If the released breaths from the watchers had been free to leave the station, its orbit might have been changed

messgrably Garger, safely on ordinary ground, did not make her way at once back to the set. She nicked up. Isbelled, and pouches several dirt samples from points as close to the edge of the notch as she could move the stuff. She given made a point of

working loose a specimen where soil and smoothness seemed to blond. Then, without haste, she returned to the aircraft and varietied from the screens. "Don't but the factory on takeoff!" Arthur cried, then,

Ginger made no answer. A few seconds later Their ship gate the acr, and a minute after that had reached ram speed with something under a bundred kilograms of mass in her tanks-"There's a thunderhead at forty kilometers, two hundred degrees," Mana informed ber

"Right. Thanks. Is there anything I should do white I'm bere, after I muce up? Or have I already earned a mission credit? I did pack up a lot of data. Belvew wondered whether she would have thought of

using the jet to free herself, but was far too polite to suggest this explicitly.

"How about spiriting the credit?" he asked innocently

> END OF PART ONE (To be continued Next Issue)



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RED N MOONED CCCLUED

were blooding where she had been graspong the buildhead. The claws, furning in on themselves when fiety could not find purchase on the duralloy plaining at the hatchway, had purchase on the duralloy plaining at the hatchway, had purchased there peaks. She were only and walked back into the head to sook the cuts. She put clotting powder, from the field middeal kit, on the wounds and got the blooding exoppod. All I seed now it to the blording all over the place, the peak of the peak of the planting of the place of the longer of the rate of the state of the communication is was

she had tosted it as she stripped for her shower.

If was now itself that the intermises to everning food. She
keyed up the bridge and Pornel had the comm. He advased her
there had been so status change and all had remained quiet.

She sit down is the terminal and punched in another Gurrein
traffic survey, this one for the last four hours. Again the
comister answered with nothine significant it was what she

had expected. Realizing she was still naked she went to her locker to select a fresh ner of trousers. She located another black over to match her mood, as well as the potentiality that combat black might soon be needed for the entire crew. She clipped on her rank belt and strode from hor quarters heading for the lift. Her mind returned to her meeting with the Vorlatin. Ya'Sun. Too many questions remained unanswered. It simply was unbelievable that the Sun clan ship. Er'Tar, was uninvolved. Nys pride merchant shins were being destroyed. and the Et Tar always seemed to be nearby When she arrived at the ward room, she was reheved to find it empty. She hadn't wanted to get with staff senarated from crew tonight. She went back out, into the passageway, and headed for the galley. The galley had enough space for five full

complements of staff and crew. It's use by staff officers was

opposed and during times of stress, the staff negally avended

once that parts up, we'll have a shop helly fill of partset must with the cred by our Lath val all the side poster right now. We'll, at least they're both stag: the contract of the contract of the contract of the contract to minute lather by Progise — Prepis both gas at the jour wheel, we man that supportunity referred and alart It contractly dish't look like they yet our form the same does all south, each surty surface. She wendered if they would be cost long enough to we to pull the cost of the cost o

This was really good though. She had a rear quarter

section, henced out, almost arms pounds worth. She had to control hermel's being from ravaging her foot. She considered getting a half pound of this foot desert said though butter of \$8.50 warm's getting any thinners, no matter how rooth of this jump strangs were getting to be. I'll be denoted if i'll te consider jump of transcript. The denoted is not the consideration of transcript. The denoted is not the transcript when the denoted in the transcript when the denoted in the denoted in the transcript when the denoted in the transcript when the denoted in the denoted in

with cape of fer (a hot beoth drink with nutritional supplements added) and the whole crew was feeling pretty adcernal.

The conversation soon charged to that of Siffa, the home planet, and those on it. Most of the crew had just completed recent leave on Siffa and wanted to share now, now and old, about their respective sub-prade groups. Koes att quarth factoring and was soon look in memory.

Kees was running neross light brown grassland with two moons riving overhead. Nomel and Emil, slightly vallow and green in hue, were both full and heaptiful. Her mate Gatran was running beside her and she felt her muscles alternately bunchers and stretching as she lost berself fully in the yoy of an open run. There was pecy here in the hills, but she wasn't even looking, much less chasing. She had a full belly and Gatran beside her. She needed nothing also. The moons had risen on a time that would never find her happens, nor more content. Her leaves were few, far between, and too short. She truly collished her downworld time, but she never really co used to being out in the open. Too much time in space had russed that. She still loved the feeling of freedom that only this kind of a run could gave. When she was running like this everything felt right with the world. She knew where she belonged, and why she worked a predator ship. Nothing could be more important than protecting the pride and this beautiful

be more important than protecting the probe and this beautiful home world, home world, however, and the proposal at a ridge overbooking, a green lake. These well-be and the protection of the proposal and the pr

Size came out of her thoughts just in time to hear her engineering officer.

I have been been been been been been been they look as "hill of those punels double checked caption. They look as "hill of those punels double checked to be put of a stong of hard jump on behind, I approximately one getting to that so quickly. I'll feel better if we have to pull out fast. That's fine hand of work that mishes you a credit to our prida, and grows me

the opnosed succid. I want to banck all of you for the Land of performance power will per in, under stress and without adoquate real. You are all a credit to your pends and I am horsed nie by sure opnosed. The Size as a die route to have the performance of the performance of the contract of the formation of the contract of the performance of the comcomplication, it was not the contract for the to be not few with the complication, it was not the contract for the best from that the quality of the corn and expected only the best from that. It was very mental for Koot to toggestable more prefixings, where the contract of the performance of the contract of the large to the performance of the contract of the contract of the large to the performance of the contract of the contract of the large to the performance of the contract of the contract of the large to the performance of the contract of the contract of the large to the contract of the contract of the contract of the large to the large to the large to the contract of the contract of the large to the large to the large to the large to the contract of the large to the l

### Red Moon Occluded

TWO the middle

Kons was straightening out her cabin's antercom for the meeting when her comm beeped. She answered the call at her terminal.

"Captain here, go ahead." Hathit, the second weapons officer spoke, "Captain, secure message here from station offices. It's from the

stationmaster and marked for captain's eyes only. Came in over the shielded line."
"Send it down to this terminal."

"Huntross."
The terminal lit up:
TO: CAPTAIN CONCOLORON

## VESSEL NYS' RED MOON FROM; STATIONMASTER YA'SUN

TOP PRIORITY
EXPEDITE

Your welcome here has expered. Docking privileges
for ALL hys pride vessels are hereby revoked. You will be

provided safe passage outsystem by Ra'Shm. Thu will be commenced SAP. Plears advise earliest possible outdock homediate outdock is requested B'Tur will not be accompanying you - at any point. She was destroyed eighteen hundred hours this date, vicinity Lina point. No other information authorized for release.

Advise receipt and intent to comply.

Kees purched up the bridge, "Sound general quarters
- battle stations, we're pulling out. I want us off station power
NOW. Hold docking position with docking collar RELEASED. Keep us now to station in this slip, but I want us free to pull out without outdock clearance."

"Featuress," came the response from someone whose voces she doin't quite recognize, then a muffled "Dums" from sconwibers off miles, just as Kees broke the connection. She keyed up the stanomaster's office and sent the following message over the open communications channel. She know he secure line would be gone momentarity.

TO STATIONMASTER YA SUN FROM: NYS' RED MOON/ KEES NYS COMMANDING

Message received and understood.
Will outdook fifteen minutes.
Escort dented.
Will outcotten ASAP.

She re-keyed the bridge and was reflected to see that Manat had the comm. "We're pulling out. Undock and outsystem course in ten minester, Flot and lay in that course, vourself. They're trying to give us exocut. I want us ventioned for Lima point, short jumping to Fa Tep, then to Cordel point."

Gott, capting, plotting at now.

That well give as down near a month, objective, to see what the hell is going on, and whatever it is that flury bostord's not telling me, though Koos as give internal cut of her calos and board the yowl of the battle stakes ailer die out. With any lack, Sue clan will think we're trying to get right in

the middle of whatever it is that's going on out there. As she entered the bridge, she was pleased to see a full complement of nemornal.

"Captain, I've advised crew to stand by for full acceleration outsystem and a jump series, Course is laid in and we're ready to move on your go," said Mnait. Keen knew bow much abe had asked of Mnait and

was once again supressed by but abbition. To glot and lay an course, that complex, in the time she had, was super b work. With the added complexation of trying to make it look like they were going somewhere they weren't, if were please comewhere they weren't, if were please promote had it inght, there was no need for anyone to check it over.

"Field comm while I prepare a mossage," said Kees as she turned to her communications board. Bringing the communications computer to her screen, she keyed in the following message;

TO: NYS PRIDE COUNCIL FROM: NYS' RED MOON/ KEES NYS COMMANDING

## IN SERVICE TO THE PRIDE

Have been expelled Fa'Lac station with inference of exclusion from Verlands paper. Expulsion/exclusion addressed to ALL with the same of the same of the same of which is the same of the same of the same of waste. Have been advised of destruction Verlatin rhyp El'Tie, location Likan point. No further data obtained. Request any and all data obtained by pride during jump time lag. Will query upon re-entry at believed safe

location.

May the pride's hust be fruitful.

Kees transferred the message to Han's boards with instructions to simul-transmit, fully encoded, on both wide band frequency and tight band FTL to Siffs.

from Rs. "Sam, sdevamp in they are prepared and waiting our cutdock." They request modern servation to jump point and our jump coordinates," advised Hina. "Tell them we'll be polling out at a speed comfortable and moderate for a Nys prade producte ship, and we expect them believed us. Give 'en single name coordinates for Linn-

point. That should get us an interesting response."
Transmitting now, Captain.
"Minist, pull us out slow, item us around and give us full emergency acceleration. Advise crew of state. Perjes, stay awake on that board, we may get all busy. Sun clim never had much use for us before—even less now 1'd factor. Have Hathir

awake on that others, we may get real retay. Sun men nover much use for us before—even less now ! of factor. Here Hathir member aft traffic.

"Already assigned, Huntress," rephad Peryos.

"We're clear station, stand by for shap's gravity."

They were momentarily we earliess as the shap becker.

from station, losing station induced gravity. Nose reflexively grabbed the arms of her acceleration couch, then, as steps gravity built up, she felt herealf settle back into the seat. Suddenly she could havely move her muzzle, as the fusion engines kicked in and the acceleration couch absorbed her weight at full threat.

When she was able to speak, she queried Perjes,

"Weapons officer, status?"

"Postimity boards clear, Re "Siess moving on intercent

course," replied Perjos.

"Re Shew advises to moderate speed and requests new jump coordinates. They advise access to that jump point desand." Kees heard Htan's voice over her communications implant and responded, "Tell" 'on we're vectored out and we'll

get them our new jump coordinates as soon as we can factor them."

"Done, business."

"Station is ordering redock. They say we violated end protocol and they demand our immediate return." and Nation

"Station is ordering resourc. They say we vacuated exaprotocol and they demand our immediate return," said Nator from the second communications poet.
"Can Ra" Nives get us targeted at current acceleration and vector?" Kues sixted Perspa.

"Not frum their current position, they don't have the acceleration capabilities. I don't know what else is our three though. It is possible that most everything military went to Luma point. I don't show anything close enough for scan to determine ship type."

"Fold current course and acceleration," ordered Keps.

"Captain. Ro' Shen is only making a halfbearted attempt at pursuit. They're only at half acceleration." said Perges. "They seller don't wann as real had or they expect to get at us the other side of jump."

"Look like they bought it then. I'd het my tail they got is half fleet at Lima point checking out the Et The dobris. Worder what they'll think when we don't show up for the

party they're holding for us? "commercied Kees. The jump kinetic states are used to the same place and the panel kinetic sounded at a three quote kinetic and Kees punched an allship comm. "We're strunging two long ones with only course correction time in hetween. Be ready and stay simpped down Junp in one minute." then turning to Minast she said, "You've got this sone all the way to Corded poure, Put is as diead definition."

correction time in networkers, the reasy stat any sampped cown. Justip in one minute, "then turning to Minat she soad, "Year' so got this one all the way to Cordel pour. Put us at dead deaft when we punch back in at Cordel."

"Hunteress," was all Minat could raply. She knew it was a gesture of extreme trust that Kees would give her full corner under those circumstance.

Kees turned to Peries, "Ears up. I'm expecting company. Then everything was gone, while at the same time everything was still there, or here, it was impossible to auritum. and each crewmember experienced the jump phenomenon. differently. Each name was always, at least in little ways. different. No one really know what happened when the sump panels cycled, putting them into hyperspace. Somehow, they lost half a month in a few short moments, while they struceled with consciousness and felt alternately as if time flew by, and then stood still. It took, seemingly, a half day for Musit to reach the retros, as they came screaming through Fa'Ten Fa'Tep was simply a jump point in Vorlatin space, named after the star located them. A star with no inhabited planets and no space studion, only a navigation beacon and a few sensors. Just a stor with enough gravity pull to get them back into realispace Red Moon had her ID blanked and was putting out Vorlatin mystem hauler ID transmissions. They had recorded them at Fa'l ac. a strictly illegal action and against several provisions of the Manifest. Then again, the way they olumned to blow through this system violated a lot more than mere provisions of the Manifest. It violated thines like common sense and the idea of having some care for personal safety The bridge came alive with a flurry of activity.

Alarms went off, tolling them what they were doing was crazy.

and the navigation beacon was telling their navigation

computer to slow down. Everyone was busy resetting overrides and manual controls to prevent the navigation system from otherwine remain invagational procedures.

Manual was first to speak, "Captain, we're right in the hole, conter of the window. We can jump again in three manuses at present acceleration."

This clinic Manual Paries was not not "Neitong?"

minutes at present acceleration."

"Exactlent, Masset Perjes, we got any visitors?"

"Nothing within soan range and no trails. The place is cold caption."

"OK. Minist, bold course and jump at will."
"We're gour hack in," repleted Minist. Suddenly
Kees warst sure if they just went through Fa'Top, or were still
on soute. Then, just as suddenly, they were coming out of
hyperspace again, dropping hack down into railby. It was now
a full month after Koos left Fa'Lac, yet she had lost only a few
moments. Except for the true through Fa'Toe, the flight ball

been nearly instintaneous.

Purpes, are we clear?' asked Kees.

"Looks like at Screens are clean and no traits."

"Statting down to stoped power," advised Maast.

"Maked Kees.
"Net crough to stream us, and we'll be coasting right along with what we did bring. No bazard to us. No staten here and hepfully no ships either," replied Hathat. She was mentioning recond seagons coasted and had paperaishfully for

secondary scan

Damn to, ky we didn't hole ourselves or blow a
panel, flying through Fa'Tep this way," then turning to her
communications board, Kros punched up engineering and
saiked Tesh, 'What's our statut down there, how did we bold
up?" Tesh replied over Kros, 'comm implant, 'We're solid,
cantain one handard mercant status, Dalis't res heck in un one

Koes punched in allahip comm. Tride of Nys. We are at Cordel point. We're going to sit it out here for awhile, each our breath and find out what exactly is going on All pressorate will remain on alter status with standard drep space shift rotation. It looks like we're allone out here; hope it stays this way for awhile."

They were deep in Sipean space, a solid jump from

single system.

They were deep as Supcan space, a solid jump from the Vegitain held areas, braided in the general direction of home space. The Supcars were an insectioil rare, and there was no reason to expect problems from them. Relations had beer good between them and their Concoleren neighbors. Knets was starting to come off her adventillen, and

rying to figure how long they would need to hole up here. The slap was running on steed power, with the fusion engines shirt down, active sensons and transmitters blarked out. They would mly on provious near only, and they would use that springly. It would be recomply to assure them they were quite alone "Captain, firing fosten engines to dump speed, we're out reach teat," said Masse.

Captain, firing fusion engines to dump spood, we're out peetly tar,' said Manar.

"Understood,' said Kees and then over allship, "Brace for deceleration."

The ship lux-hed hard as the retros fired, slowing the

The ship lurched hard as the retros fired, slowing the shap from its near light speed in a short time, they were it be edge of the gravity well formed by the dwarf star that had pulled them from hyperispace. The fution engines left an obvious trail, but once that faded, they would look nearly like any other rock, as long as nobody came too close. "Nothing local coming in, the only long range stuff

I'm getting is Saycan," said Hua They wouldn't be able to pick up any FTL

### Red Moon Occluded

transmissions until they were fully powered up, with all scan operational. Right now they would have to wast for any news from home.

"Passon engines down, captain, We're at dead drift."

Triston engines down, captain, we re at dead arm. 'Understood,' replaced Kees, only half heatmap, with her mind beay trying to such out their estimation. There had nove been open hostilities between Concoloron and Vorison shape before. That made their spection from a Vorisian station all the more commons. Personal disagreements had always been settled personally, usually on

disagreements had always been setfled personally, usually on the docks, stateonate. Nys Prade was the largest space firming prode and the Vorlatms most Blody considered them the closed thing to a planetary government that the Concolemen had been been a fallow wouldn't change their current position. Xes beared to Perjos, Them weapons scan over to

Kees termed to Perjes, "I'am weapons scan over to Hathir I want you rested. If we need you later, we're gonna' need you real bad." "Huntress," replied the weapons officer as he shifted control of the weapons comp to Hathir's boards. No argument,

control of the weapons comp to Hathir's boards. No argument, he know she was right. There was no one siles on board that could handle a weapons comp the way be could. It had saved them before and things weren't getting any quiete.

He got up slowly, making a conscious effort to knop his east up. He was porned by Edn and Pernell as the caption's

voice came over allsimp.

"Pride of Nys, all personnel will take deep space watch detect and rotation. Those off now will not immediately so as to turn relief shift ASAP. May our Pride's hunt be fruitful."

The FTL hyperspace jump process was rough on the Concoloron system. To dudn't feel this grou'ts been up long, but the stresses on the body were termendens. When you were with stress or threat, and finally got to slong, you shop! the the doud and woke up starting, Jump strings were especially hand Standard proceedings called for a work break between games, stondard proceedings called for a work break between games, steed and your claws grew out. Prehaps the mind lost time during the jump start, the body creating dudn't.

during the jump state, the body creaminy dasher.

Kiese opened har arment consoli and pulled out a hard

Kiese opened har arment consoli and pulled out a hard

Kiese opened hard metal consoli and pulled out a hard

becathe. The stuff tasted benefits, that the wast fitney sail the

textals. The stuff tasted benefits, that the wast fitney sail the

story of the story but most everything also har body modeld right now.

She had been just to tast he proof; jump fillads and the

stuff of the stuff o

watch.

I'm going to have to get a medical officer on board, sho thought. If we're going to be under this kind of pressure, the crew won't be able to hold up without someone looking ofter these.

I zure at hell don't have the matinets for the job.

She got up and left the bridge. If she expected the rest
of the crew to obey her rest order, she'd have to set an
example. She had held off eet period with first group less time,
and almost missed getting any ears. She wouldn't rist it under
correst conditions.

She went straight to her den and up onto the shooping

shelf. She hadn't eaten and her stomach was keeping her awake. She couldn't shake the butter vision that, this time, could he from her bunger, stress, or just plain fear. She reided over and willed herself to sleep. In her current condition, it

actually worked.

As the defined off the found herself fermining of Sift. Thus men if was not a relaxing roung in the month it shid this awaited her, but a brightly it meeting room full of older profemanbers, the relange class of Nys Prids. She was standing before the Prida council and she was the subject of the decreasion. She want' allo to comprehend what was the discussion. She want' allo to comprehend what was not been considered to the council of the council of the discussion of the command. She to do to speak to them, but it was as if she was,'

She tred to speak to thou, but it was as it size wearthere. Somewhere, in her still partially consistous mind, she knew her dream was not so far removed from reality. All she need do is mess up the next few command decisions, and her dream would become a nightnare reality.

## THREE Kees entered the ralley and found it empty. She had

expected as much, same everytone on first watch would have already unter, and second watch was astrong these current day shaft. She selected a govern hauselt sed forward it mits of the selected a govern hauselt sed forward it mits of the tenerate taken, pocking up as hot up of for on the way. The hauselt was a tarble portion, warghing aimset for pourtle, but only measures later if was totally devoted. She toesed the hard power of the second of the contract of the contract of the second of the contract of the second of the second

the throughout without his last the state of the state of

The destruction of a Vordaten puma class warship was own any matter, specially doing so understeed. The artacle of Great Promite had shown as more real planning and reporter to the proposal pumper of the proposal proposal pumper as tading yeased by surprise was one thing, but the 2Tr own as had been proposal pumper to the proposal pumper a tading yeased by surprise was one thing, but the 2Tr own as have been on an left to considering what had been proposed All that should have made a successful stack impossible, for have been on an left to considering when had been proposed to the state of the proposed of the proposed of the doing 100 of 12T level and Great Proposity would have bad into the coll for body. You can only supert to many shape to be missed on some or effectively plading. Devey way she termed a the found a construction of the proposed of proposed of the prop

The Vorlatins were huge hirty creatures, massing will over an knadend pounds. They find on vegetable matter primarily, only occasionally onting meat—and help sold their points with them helds confined and designated help making the same primarily and military feroes for other species. Controlerons would never him a creature that would sell loyally, now would a Concoloron seek and outside it's own species. Controlerons that the same primarily of the same prim

that ship was fost and extremely well armed. The outcome of a meeting between that ship and Ren Moor weighed heavily on her. Her mind menined cluttered as the tossed her now empty or of fet into the disposal and walked out of the pailer. She stopped at the wardroom, checking is seen if anyons was then: It was empty as well and she continued on to the lift, heading for the bridge.

As she cutored the beidge, Koes awe Hathatt and Eth.

After a momentary cars down sign of submission, both returned to their screens. Kees walked over to Esh and, leaning over ber at the complemental, told her.

"Plot thrue courses out of here and have them mady to

"Plot three courses out of here and have them mady to lay in if we need them. One through Garreim space to Togan space and two direct to Concoloron space." "Working, Huntress."

Wisham, prepare FTL radio for a short burst transmission to Silfa. I don't want to be located by anyone outside the Fride. They will be wasting for a message from us and should be able to reply almost immediately," said Kees.

"Right, Captain," replied Hathst.
Turning to her own console, she sat down and keyed in the following mossage:

TO: NYS PRIDE COUNCIL

FROM: PREDATOR SHIP RED MOON
KEES NYS COMMANDING

Please update.
Our situation stable.
Will await your response.

Then, turning to Hathit, she said, "To your board, send it now."
"Transmitting, Captain," replied Hathit. After what seemed only a few moments, Hathit spoke again, "Priority

message coming in, Captain."

"Record and then blank us back down," ordered Kees.

"Systems blanked Captain. Message is on your board," repland
Hathit.

On Kont' screen, the response took shape.

TO: RED MOON

KEES NYS COMMANDING

FROM: NYS PRIDE HIGH COUNCIL

Meet cowrier ship at coded coordinates 17 19 04 37
21461 18 ASAP

END

They're sure being careful, thought Koos as she
punched in the coredinates, sending them to lith's board.

'Set a course immediately, locks like one, maybe two
jumps from here. They fugured us pretty damn close. Koos,
knowing the code system by memory. had their destination.

shrash othermined.

"Working, captain," Esh spoks as she worked at deciphering the coordinates, "Looks like we're gonas he upming bek pad Linas point. N' deep in the Spouse centilee, shore Vorkins space. We'll end up well within jump range of make few men gonas per gona the make few not gump, a lig one hat within capabilities. We'll jump right over the Vockins Spoan comer.

Koss tumed to her common board, purching in allabip.

followed by the Captam's voice.

Somewise by the Lightin's viscous.

The property of the control of

personnel to their stations immediately. May the Pride's hurribe firstfell."

Kees picked up her earn with a conscious effort and, tarning to Esh and Harbit said, "You've both pot five manutes for vourselves, once your relief arrives. Use it was well, but he

here at your statuess in five minutes.\*

Kees never gave them a chance to respond and, turning back to the comm beard, keyed up engineering, "Tesh, any reason to expect a problem with a full distance jump?"

No, Capitain, we're one hundred percent here. Beerything leaf, all systems and back-ups have been checked,"

rophed Tesh, the engineering officer.

"Okay, once you get your supplies, strap in and stay
there mentioning."

"All set up, Captien, Scan and engines are ready when
you not them back on line."

you put them back on line."

"Excellent."

Minist bud arrived and relieved Esh. She was checking over Esh's course calculations and said, "Everything is right on Castain, looks nood."

"Activate fusion engines now. Acceleration to begin in theirs seconds—mark." Then over all-blem, Kees sond, "Probe of Nys, prepare for moderate acceleration in twenty seconds." The shap lurched as Perjec relieved Hathit. He adveste, "All claer on sean Notting waiting out there beyond

passive range. Chricking targeting systems now."

Bit had necessed to the bridge and was checking and
rifiling each station's jump supplies.

See saw didn't late my time for herself, thought
Kees, as Esh finished her checks with the captain's station,
then sat down at uscend assigned "s post
Hasthi refurend and took secred waspeers comp. Site
would handle whatever Perjes them her way, along with say

overload. With Peyes running first wapsons comp, there had yet to be neything thrown he way dering a fife high, real or simulated, and the computer had never somed a need to everload anything of Peyes's boards. Peyes was the best three was. The only real combat experence Habit ever had was in Peyes's sheene. Otherwise, she just sat there, monitoring the systems automatic functions that kept the waapons collar supplied and functioning, and washed uson.

Han piopped down into place at the communications station, and Natur, a society officer with communications background, and monitoring the auxiliary communications station. Pornel was strapped down in the acceleration coach near the lift and bad the batch secured. Kees looked around, soung everyone in place and strapped besself down. Then ske opened a coam hies to engineering, to check on the remaining to the communication of the communication of the coach and the communication of the communication of the coach period as coam hies to engineering, to check on the remaining to the coach of the coach of the coach period as coam her to engineering, to check on the remaining to the coach of the coach of the coach and the coach of the coach the c

crowmembers.
"Engineering status?" asked Koos.
"Clear, Capturn. Personnel accounted for and secured.
I'm mentioning from bridge screens," project Tosh.

Kest turned to her comm beard, punching in alliship.
Two short electronic chirps were heard throughout the shap,
the bridge during battle stations, eagmooring officer Tesh and it
to be designed during battle stations, eagmooring officer Tesh and it

security officer. They were ready and would be monstoring from their location. This would free anyone on the bridge from korping the engineering section advised of routing harmonimes. All the boards were lit up, with each crewmember running and re-running their checks. Kees and Pomel were the only ones sitting quetly. Mnait had the comm, and knew Kees

was watching her closely. "Bring engines to full acceleration," ordered Kees "Huntress," replied Mnast, and then over allishin, "All

hands stand by for full accoleration, followed by jump requence."

You have the comm, Muset," said Kees, "But it will Then there was no more conversation, as breath was pressed from each of their lungs by the steadily increasing acceleration forces. Every set of ears was flat against its owner's head fur. There was total concentration as they raced for the yarm point. Everyone on the beside was furbine hunter vision, trying to concentrate and stay calm. The sump warming charged three times, the sound basely penetrating their tightly folded ears. Each was deeply entrenched in their own personal stalk, trying to anticipate the prey's next move, hoping to spring reither too early, nor too late. Each despreadely wanture to believe they were not springing into the arms of the

## predator, while missing the prev-As they drawned out of hyperspace. Kees could feel

the pulses emanating from the tume panels. They seemed to be in time with her stemach's knotting and unknotting. She was still only nartially conscious when Perios called out: not alone. Got a ship just outside visual, unknown origin, she's not outrettine. Mass shows lynx to puma class. Hathit, I want exclusive monitor on that vessel."

"Hold speed, Mnart," ordered Kees, "Whatever it is sure as hell knows we're here." Hian's ears went flat, "Another ship just jumped into sector ID output- it's Red Sky, Captain! To our post, further out from undentified vessel.

"Hism, output proper ID immediately, I don't want lan any more confused than we are. Put us on coded comm line. Let's see if we can't corner this little bastard. Meait, full hraking on retros, bring the speed down. Follow weapons come positioning requirements. Perjes, you got the intruder identified yet?"

That's negative, Captain, He's outbound vectored but at a steady speed. We'll come up within range for visual and full scan in two minutes. Will target at that point, but we'll need to hold speed for snother minute and a half." "Following weapons officer's request, Captain," said Mnait, "Retros of Kees downed her jump fluids in one attempt, nearly losing them all over the bridge. Half choking she reelied.

"Affirmative, you have the comm." "Captain, tight beam transmission from Red Sky, you want if?" asked Hitm.
"Put it on audio and switch transmission to my mike," said Kee Over the bridge speakers boomed Ian's unmistakable

voice, "Red Moon, what the hell's epin' on? That one of your friend's Koos? Let's get some data over here!" "Ne outry on the friend, Red Sky. Ship is unidentified Will have him on close scan momentarily," replied Kees.

Kees closed the connection with Red Sky and, terring to the second communications post said, "Nator, handle further communications with Red Sky. I want Ham free "Transferring to Nator's board," said Hun "Acknowledged, Huntress," rephod Nator.

"Stand by for auto-evasive, we are being targeted now," warned Hathit "Request authorization for targeting and return fire on

"Lock into targeting computer only. No response except on my go," said Koes, "No one's going to say we fired first!"

Hathit called out, "Positive scan match on ship, Computer comparison shows puma class Voriatin design vessel. Trails show she's been here for some time. Looks to be coming about and her targeting scan is locked on our ship. Red Sky is out of range. Still no 1D transmission from Vorlatin

shen "Mnsit, activate all record stations. I want this down solid " ordered Kees.

"Ship locked onto targeting computers, request firms go code, Captain," and Perjes. Then, before Kees could respond. Red Moon maked hard to topside. The acceleration couch restraining webbing was tested by ten Concoloron bodies being pulled out of their seats at several times normal gravity. The webbing contracted, cutting off any chance of speech, as each crowmembers' lungs

was compressed tightly The screens on the bridge exploded with bolt as whole systems went to backup, and a few to third byeass circuitry. The sounds of compressed metal were mixed with sounds of air escaning into hard vacuum. The ship seemed to moun, as structural braces were stressed, and pieces of loose metal screamed as they scraped down the length of the hall.

The impact activated the computer's evade program. overriding Musit's gavigation control. The ship was coming about hard, and targeting computers kept the Vorlatin ship Koos was first to catch her breath. Turning to Pories

she said, "Perjes, you've got your go code, take him out. Esh, damage control to your board. All stations report system faslures to second navigation post." Purjus was deep in concentration at his board, ears flat back, and teeth bared in what could nover he described as a

smile. He spoke as he manipulated the weapons comp. Targeting Captain.

"Finng "Sinke effective - she's open." Mnait called out, "Stand by for inbound roll. I have comm secured from auto-evasive. We're coine in after her Nator received a transmission, over the tight beam

"Red Moon - request status. We observed first strike and an recording. Suggest you do the same from your position for triangulation. Will be in position to assist in two minutes. Advise if you are sound and tight.

Peries switched on his communications interface. overriding Nator Red Sky, this is Red Moon's weapons officer. Request you tie into our navcome. We armed sound and turbs.

We are executing inbound roll. Request you flank us for rock up or cut off of hostile vessel." Esh called out her damage report.

"Docking collar and observation loungs are hit. Whole first level good pose to vacuum, First level sealed self and holding. Second level seals are activated and holding. Second level seals are activated and holding. Second level seals are activated and holding. Bettergravy one thirt said holdings alreed one. Come and core lift lemegrave to the said head holding and come for all considerable properties. Docking certifier is gone. All other systems sold. Sen instead weepone collect undexided. Engineering advises we are at fall strength, so maneuverability nor defines capability to come the second properties."

lan's voice again came over the bridge speakers. "Red Moon, we are locked into your navoump, Commencing inward roll to your flash." Aggressor ship coming into our targeting range."

"Captain, they haven't fired on Red Sts. Could they

range."

Captain, they haven't fired on Red Sky. Could they
not have noticed him?" asked Hathit.

Hathit's query went unanswered, as Projes reported,
"We have as nit strike on the Vorlatin vessel. Confirmed by

scen. At least thirty percent panel damage. The Vorlains aren't gon' far now. Retargeting."

"Lot's gut her m a holding pattern with Red Sky. Hun, see if you can raise the Vorlain. Use wide band, micr-Manifest frequency."

"Huntress," replied Htsa. Hathit called out;

"Red Sky just took a hit.
"Looks mirror - grazing strike."
"Vorlatin ship advises to propage our graves - no other

"Vorsian sup savies to prepare our gaves—no ounce response." "Vorsian swinging starcode, picking up speed fast, she'll be out of range momentarily."

The ship lurched hard to port, crewmembers momentarily losing consciousness. The ship vibrated and monand while the computers sterested the frame while

simultaneously saving the stop from a killing blow.
Perjes spoke, "Retargeting, moving back within
range. She's playing with us."
"Auto-evasive failure, forward stabilizer goes, am

securing to full minuted rate," said Minist.
"Wonderful"
"Move her in bard, I need speed, can't keep her
locked," said Peries. Then switching to Red Sky's frequence,

"We are off computer guidance, secure from our navcomp, stay on the Vorlatris port side." "Affirmative, Red Moon, well comply."

"Athemstive, Ned Moon, will comply." Hathit broke in: 'Captaen, Red Sky in range of Vorlatin. "Double strike.

'On target.

The Verbain is split right down the middle.

The whole ship is open to vacuum!'

Perjes spoke up, "Targefing gene. I show insufficient
mass to activate targetum; county Only sub-ship size debtis.

Clearing waspons comp."

He leased back from the waspons console, his earn coming up for the first time since they completed jump.

Roll cancelled, retros on. Slowing approach to agreeser ship," said Mindt.

The ship lurched, slowing hard, and coming about to a

more direct path with the debris that, just a few moments age, was the Verlaim ship.

"Bastard's creary, I wanted those damn Verlatins slive. We're gorne learn a whole lot from that pule of garbage out there." for a clear me to the ship to share comm.

anve. We're genera tearn a whote left from that pure of garre out there," then, hooking a claw into the ship to ship con board, "Ian, what the hell are you doing?" Red Sky's communications of finer responded,
"Aggressor shap disabled, moving in for ID and recovery!
rescue operations."
"There's nothing buy enough left to hold a damn.
Vorking Grow me year Capitan, this is Kees Nys!"
"Serry, Capitan, Ian Nys is occupied with ID and rescue operations."
Kees yours notify and turned to her satellizence.
Kees yours notify and turned to her satellizence.

officer, "Pernel, suit up and take Htan and Perjes with you. See what's left of that ship, aspecially ID and comp data. Perjes, Hathin has your boards. You answer to Pornel white off ship."
"Huntiess," replied Perjes as the three largest males left for the shuttle bays.

for the shuttle buys.

"Eith, any further damage?" soked Keee.

"Negative, Huntrees, status as previously recorded."

"Fane." sand Kees, as she keeped up engageerin.

"Fane," said Kees, as she keyed up engineering,
"Status!"
Tesh responded, "We're solid down bore, Captain.
Tam is suiting up in preparation for repair and reseal."

"As soon as we are stabilized at dead drift get out there and make sure we can go hyperclive. I would prefer us not coming apart."
"Huntress."
Mmait called out, "We're coming up on debris zone.

Menit called out, "We're coming up on debris zone.
Appears to have minimal residual velocity. Slowing to match
spece."
"Hold us a couple miles out and match drift! I think
use're gome be here awhile," and Kees. Then, over allshup,
"All nersonnel, scores from battle stations, maritain reads.

alect status."
"Sure doesn't look like much left out there," said
Maast.
"I'm going to get some explanation out of him, and on

more than this one incident. He's arranged out of ann, and out
more than this one incident. He's in too deep on this. We've
got just too damn many coincidences," said Keei
"He's the courier ship I suppose?" saked Masit.
"Down and he to the courier ship I suppose?" saked Masit.

"Damn well better be. There sare yen't any other
encuse for him to show up here," replied Kees.

There was a short electronic chirp as Pornel's voice
came over the communicator. "Ready to discovere shuttle.

Caption, on your go."

Kees opened the shuttle comm line, "Whonever you thank at looks good. We'll be stabelizing with the debris. No quick moves expected from this end."

"May be Pride's beant be frustful, am disongaging now, Hautress," said Pornel.

Kees turned and addressed the bridge crew, "Hathit,

you take communications to your boards. Esh and Nator, you're off shift, get some food and rest. I want everybody as fresh as possible.

Esh and Nator rose from their stations, each showing the pressures of the last few hours. (Or weeks, depending on one's perspective.)

Kein practical up the shuttle channel, "Forust, how does thole can then? You close enough to see arythm?" "Red Sky's shuttle is already at the debts. Looks to be two or three similed up and on tothers from the ship, I've got markings on the forward hull, recording for translation. They note to be Sum chan. Han's a saying with the ship, Pergis and I's sold to be Sum chan. Han's a saying with the ship. Pergis and I's "Penich me into your sust radios. I want to be kept advised. We'll be keeping everything on record from the end,"

said Kees. "Acknowledged, Bustress."

### Red Moon Occluded

Kees leased back and transit towards Hathst. "Keep those weapons hot I want to see those safety lights flushing. We still don't know what the hall's going on. Hathst dowlet and triple checked her boards, verifying that all the automatic warning and proximity functions of the wapons comy were activated. The computer, once in assault mode, would target any and all ships within range. That mothed Red Sty and Red Sty's shartle, along within any delens

large enough to register as ship size. Only Red Moon's own shirtle was himstod.

A claw, carelessly stack into the open fire slots, would distroy any or all the other vessels. Even more obscencering, was the fact that Hubbi fully expected Red Syviwapons control to be similarly activated, and Hubb and to confidence as the Red Sty weapons officer. Its was even known to opparable weapons comprise his command chair, so

AsoWa to operals weapons comp from his command chair, so the borotic were definitely in the hands of a line experience of the borotic were definitely in the hands of a line experience as clear as noy inches promiseration. Capitan, very ritile field of foreward sections. I've parased the whole debras refuses and ass not provide the section of the section of the section of the purchased of the section of the section. Presty deepy or these, especially close to the contract one. Red Siv'y personnel are weeking on the Heige computer, appendix by realy to all what's left of the file braids, and there is one crewmenther to define the section of the section of the section of the original of the section of the section of the section of the original of the section of the section of the section of the original of the section of the section of the section of the original of the section of t

we'll go aft and try engineering, along with the mins computer decks. "Proceed as you will, commander, your discretion," survered Kee. "Looks as if the forward portion of the computer senmay be injust. We'll be onlyering now, suit transmission off,

Kees watched Formel and Perjos through their suit cameras. They were entering a semi-sericular save of the wrocked ship. The forward sections of the Vorlain visual wave completely gone, and there was m'invaried's appearance to the remainder of the ship. It left an impression of the sheep haven from the mission of The core and core lift had been played to be the section. The core and core lift had been played to be the section of the sheep and the section of the secti

unless called."

he was dong, and dist it dism well.

Although the computers did all the tracking and intelligent to compute the two such gas did a state of the stat

The Vortains hip had attempted just this type of attack on Red More. It had been unecessed, the major to Manit's navegational skills in positioning the ship pero to engagement, ind pulling navcoup in and out of an inde-evenive and the state of the ship pero to the same of the ship of the same of the same

section hanging away from the main portion of the decinated hip. The camera scarned rows of computer cyclat hanks, most text open, spilling their contents out into the void Towards what was once the all section of that levels computer dick, a small area appeared mainly intext. A small area appeared mainly intext. A small and Perips got quelydy by work with small laser textures, cotting away the supporting huildreads. If they could not a substituted law for the properties of t

get a substantial section of unbarmed memory back to Red Moon, many of their questions could well be answered. Projest pulled out a cargo tether and attached it to the new free floating section of computer memory storage. He leoped the high-tweight cord through an eyeles he had carefully weighed to the computer houseing, and attached the tether to one

of the cargo lines.
"Shuttle, reel in cargo line four."
"Working, commander," answered Htm.

"Working, commander," answered itim.

Kees' view showed the cut out portion of computer recording rapidly towards the shuttle. It soon became small and unrecognizable.

"Not enough small debris to indicate much in the way

of carps," said Feesel.

"Most of this steff appears structural, She was really strepped for action," agreed Perges.

They moved back along the core, level by level, following the computer storage decks of the ship. There was total destruction here, the second strike had detouated the fusion engines with the resulting backbast tearing when cations to guesses. Only a partial framework, with sections to guesses. Only a partial framework, with

"It's printly he back here, fession core must have come open. We're down to five minutes exposure time at current levels," and Projes.

Kees opened the comm link, "Don't put yourselves in any unmenously diager. Get what you can and get out. You

any unmerciniary distinger. One what you can and get our. You can check colder arms once you clear those sections."

"Understood, Huntress."

As Pornel and Perjes approached the breached fusion ungame's housing, a glow was evident. Anything this close to

the fusion core would be too dangerous to luring abourd anyway. They started back toward the area Red Sky personnel were working in. Switching suit frequency," said Pornel "Red Sky shuttle cree, may we assist?"

shuttle crow, may we assist?

"We've got it under control, everything worthwhile is already hack at the shuttle. We require no assistance," replier lian.

"Lindenstood, Captain, switching off Pride frequency, "Catch that

Captain?\* "Double check engineering, that portion furthest from the core break. If you can't do it safely, just return to shuttle and pall back in."
"Acknowledged, Hamiroos."

Hathst brought Kees' thoughts back to the hidge Captain, Tesh requesting start on damage survey on forware had. "How's our drift stability, Mnait?" asked Kees. "We're sold, "Captain, all the rough staff is confined

"We're sold, "Captan, all the rough stiff is confined to summediate debris area, radiation levels are acceptable. We have matched drift at two and a quarter miles." "Hattht, tell him to go shoud with it." "Acknowledged, Hutthress."

Kees sat considering their situation. They needed regues hadly and would be unable to dock normally until a

### Harsh Mistress SFA

complete rabuilt of the forward rectums was completed. Hoppedish, they were hyperspace worth, otherwise them would be a long wait for a carrier ship to grappin, to, then an even longer trip be let to Silla system. Being dragged house, were the second to the state of the second to the second to

organism and orangineto unit only on the rying. The Finecontrol would get two govern with one pointer. Keet usered back to the mentior showing Pornel's said camera. Pornel and Perges were circling around, toward the engineering command area, avoiding the horter portions near the engineering support sears. Fornel glianced back towards the Red Sity shrattle, Red Sity personnel were loading salvage into the shuttle holds, prepaying to rooms to their shap. He activated

the sut radio.
"Captain, you there?"

"Affirmative, commander."
"Red Sky 's shattle in pulling back. We're going to thick engineering command if we can get around the combreak, then retern as well. We're still getting heavy radiation levels, the debris is perty hot."

Thus, commander, "I've been observing."

Keet tumed towards the communications board and purchal age of the communications board and purchal age of the first officer, Varn, answered, "Go sheaf Red Moon." This is Kees Nys, commanding Red Moon. Request forward deck at our all docking port. We comment forward dock thus to durings; This would be so facilitate a menting with your careful. We will hold present position, relative to defents. I

have one shuttle to re dock and personnel on the bull making repairs, so use due caution."

"Affirmative on request, Captain, we will commence docking as soon as both shuttles are secured. Will advise time frame once datermined. We are becomed by your remonal

strention to this matter. May the Pride's bunt be frueful."

"Red Moon acknowledges."

"Red Sto out."

Hashi spoke up. 'I have Pomal on the sait fraquency for you Captain.'

"Got it," said Koss as she glanced at the menitor.

Pornel was still cut on the debris and his sast camera showed what appeared to be a complete section of indularing and computer storage. Kees opened the comm init, "I'm on frequency to the comparing the common strength of the common strength of

recovered from a Verlatin milhtary ship had an satalline's bridge in the Weddish' open it. Gow to the Verlatine untenched. They were real apprecisative. This may have the entire ship's log in R.\*

"Can you get into it once you bring it about!"

'I think so. I've gotten mal familiars with their programs and codes. Hean has a full rating on over computers and a scently rating on Verlatin and Togan unter We'll have

to tow it in though, too damn hig to fit in the shuttle.

'Fine, take your time with it. Now that we have it let's not most it up.'

'We'll treat her like a new kit, Captain, no need to

worry 'bout that '

"We'll be decking with Red Sky as soon as shuttles are secured. Let's have that aboard and under wraps right away. I don't wast questions asked before? have answers." "Understood, Captain, we're returning to shuttle, peaks to tow in now, "said Pornel."

Kees asked Massi, "Have you got a status report on the ongasecing team?"
"Affirmative, Captain, they're on level one securing the core shaft seals. You want me to check on them?"
"No, let them do their so." They don't navel me

"No, let them do their job. They don't need me worrying after them."
"Caption, we have Red Sky's shottle, Caption ian Nyrequesting to speak with you," said Hathat.

Put ham on the speakers."
Inn's worce hoomed over the bridge andso system
Kons, you wented to speak with me? Go ahead."
"We'll handle it in private lan, I've made

arrangements through your first for docking."
"Of course, Roes. My first had instructions to offer a similar arrangement, but yours is acceptable. How had are you last?
"We'll make it. We're sealing off any vulsterable

areas now. We're manustverable and weapons are up. Most likely FIL tapit, we'll know more soon." "Excellent, Kors. I am looking forward to seeing you again, it has been too long. May I offer you the hospitality of my calms for our meeting?"

my carm jet the accomplishe. Hunter. You have a message for me from Praise course.

That's accomplishe. Hunter. You have a message for me from Praise course.

Hard copy no loss. Scaled and Pride Authority marked I assume it reads similarly to the one I was processed with I feer you will not he pleased. Keex.

"Let's save the details for the moring lien."

"Let's save the details for the moring lien."

"As you wish, Huntron. I remain at your service."

"I assume that means I have access to what you pulled
off that shap."

"Of course, of course Kees, full access. As soon as I know what we have, you will have the data. I see your shuttle sen't going beam empty headed."

No, and you'll have all our data, just as soon as we get it straightened out."

"We must work closely on this Kees, lest we forget.

"I would propose a computer shant, once we have or respective unus fully on line with the added data."

"Agreed, Kees, I'll have my computer officer on it menedately. Do you have a computer officer, or do I have my officer contact your middlepence officer."

how serious this matter is."

"Our anti-linguage commander, Pornel, will be fine."

"In the mean time, may I suggest rando silence? I have
little concern over further hossitates but petfer to be somewhat
overcanisms."

We will comply. As soon as my shuttle gets in we'!

shat down to drift. I am going to keep full scan operatorsal,"
"Yes, that is wine. However it seems redundant for both of us in do so. Upon your approval, we will strat down to passive, transfig to your competence."
"Acceptable, Hunter, I anticipate our reunion. May the Padic better to Frantist."

"And may the Pride find no blockage at its trail."

Kees cleared the skep to stop channel and, turning to Hathit said, "You know, I just can't seem to stay mad at that humans. He does have the Pride's host interest at heart, he just

## Red Moon Occluded

gets too damn excited. Believe it our not, he was just trying desperately to smooth things over with me just now. He just can't stand to sound soft in frant of his crew. In a lot of ways I feel scry for him."

"Don't you get soft on us now. Cantum. Remember

Can't staind to sound not an invent of has crew. In a lot of ways I feel scry for him."

"Don't you get soft on us now, Captain. Remember how this whole mose got started," said Mrintt.

"It's only that, after what we just went though with a Veclain slap, I can appreciate lina's theory as founded in fact.

Not that I believe Vorlatt were responsible, but I do strongly suspect Vorlattin involvement. I can't explain this constant Vorlatin comestion any other way."

"Somehody did just blow the Et "Tur all to bell,"

"Somehody did just blow the Et "Tur all to bell,"

something to be proved about."

"True, but they shouldn't be any more certain of what's going on than we are. You don't see any Concoleron ships attacking Vorlatins, without even announcing termselves."

"They're different though, Captain. They sell their loyalties—they cut trees!. How can you figure a mind like that?"

Hathit inferrupted, "Captain, I just got an ID on our Verlistin aggressor Film back from Pornel abows Sun class markings and ID numbers regular back to the 2º Ram."
"I wouldn't be surprased if the Vordatins were waiting berr for jan. They had to be here in the maidle of nowhere for

some reason," said Kees.

"Caption, could be that the Voriation overgousped Red Sty, then we show up from a different vactor, such Vorlatin coupts, and couldes a list of or of flows," Gried Means — There are above a militare possibilities to the state of the Vorlation data verifies his stay," I disatch by the statight with the state of the s

up right services and services are serviced to the services and the services are serviced to the servic

"Excellent, advise me anneadately of any problems. You can cheer those weapon boards but feep som action. Any sign of trouble, asythmag at all, you are those boards." "Horevess," acknowledged Habita." "Mantt, radio Red Sky and tell them I'll be there in twenty-four house for the meeting with their captain," said

Kees as she rose from the command chair.

"Acknowledged, Huntress."

Koes, walking towards the lift, added in a low and menacing votce, "There will be no quastion as to who leads

Kees punched in all shap at the aft docking port, "Attention all personnel; I will be off shap, onboard Red Sky.

Until further notice, Mneit has command of the ship, Mneit, acknowledge. Mneit replied over the comm, "Acknowledged, Hustress, may be Pade's best for fearfuld." Kees entired the chort passageway joining the two ships She went alone, thereby acknowledging the equal status of the two captains and her trust of I am and his crew. As the reached the Red Sky sale of the corridor, the was approached

by a four crewmember honor guard. To have provided her less would have been an insult, more would have inferred distrust. Keen proopping the sprand leader as Varm, in it first officer. "We must again, Captain. I am honored to serve you. Ian best advised me that the shap is at your disposal and that you are to be taken wherever you doore."

you are to be taken whenever you design."

Your Captain's quarters will be quite sufficient at
this point Vam, but the gesture is appreciated."

"As you wish, Captain."

As you wan, Cajpean.

Red Sity crewmenthers followed Ven is lead with the three remaining Red Sity crewmenthers following close behind, lain's ship was allmost a twin of her own, aftert dightly sewer. Being cobbord about the problem of her own, after dightly sewer. Being cobbord seems and the state of the sewer of t

As they enached lan's cabin, Varn stopped hriskly aside the hatchway and activated the comm unit. "Captain, Hunters Keen Nya has arrived and regions entirely." In a responded simulately, "Then by all means let be rente. We age at the Prid's 'business'!

Bit is opposited institution, Tenn by an means at ber entire. We saw at the Plank's bostnessed. The hatch cycled open and Kees steeped through lan's other was considerably more central turn Kees', shiftneys smaller in layout. These ware only so many ways to arrange a properly equapped captain a quarter. In land of statistic years processed with the best familiance, along with a monom as practice and the way of the statistic and the statistic propercious match, were in evidence as Kees as 41 the conference halls.

"You have done well, Ian."
"One must keep appearances, Kees, even in this husiness, you on the other band, have a reputation which precludes such displays."

"Abyse, it is traly good to see you. I have missed our conversations." If so this place. The last time I was here we applie of Gairian I have missed you, yet now you bring me

more news — "I germine, only the Pride's beauties this time—surprise," replied less — the principal des principal

you do not be a second to the second the second that the We have never fully agreed on the term in the polt, he was quick and behald to the behalment of the Prind. My assist was quick and your thoughts about questioning the murdering Vorbitms, but your thoughts about questioning the murdering Vorbitms, but would not rist by our to the same fact as your uncle. I am homeoed that you went the Prinds either that Appolo presumed you with, and I would also with you for fully explain the reason you with and I would also may thin you fully explain the reason to the principle of principl

### Harsh Mistress SFA

count you one of my true friends."

If an honored, i.e., I will then speak freely as is due
that great has great in the will then speak freely as is due
that great white play is sourced in the empressing compares have
we salvaged from the ET-Raw. It shows that the ET-Raw had
over immed you and was waitine here to destrow we. When

we salvaged from the ErRam. It shows that the ErRam had over jumped you and was waiting here to destroy you. When we arrived from the opposite vector, with Voch in output, they were sufficiently confused to held firm. This would not have saved us as they have developed a new particle hearn weapon with 35% greater range. We took a hit while still well out of normal zures. All this is have shunded into your connectors as

normal range. All this is being stuned into your computers as we speak, along with detailed plans for the weapon."
"Well this is wunderful, Kees, why do you apologize? You have done a fine ich."

To more other a time the me, ina, must 1 spell it out? You town 1 you can very wife your destruction of 22.5m, yet had you not done to my thin may will have been destroyed.

"As I and, Kone, I come to as a more than fellow Finde members, I expect no thanks for assesting another Finde ship."

I spologize not for noneing your assistance, but for disdaming your methods, especially in force of your cross. I also regret ninten my over me who were my single staffer to you.

"Consider the debt paid, Keel, We are not deeply not this to worry about such things, We must truly count on each other. What is this about Er Rom, why was the tailing mad?" There is a young Sun Pride faction which desures to start hostilities with our Pride. They see if as a way to gain power within their own species. We are to be the scapesonic

power within mear own species. We are so on the supplementaforcar Province was indeed destroyed by the EF Tar. You have been right from the lengtiming.

"At least that bastard is paid. Did you discover how he was destroyed?

"Informately that too is a lie. The EF Tar still exists.

Appole was only partially averaged.

"Before you continue much further, I must stop you and show you my surprise. We too recovered a worthwhile piece of B' Rane," last turned to the console and keyed in a weapons collar view of his ship. Attached to the toppod hurrir ring was a particle beam weapons the support of the stop of th

schemato. Red Ney take a Vegraan particle team gar surveyen from Er Rated.
"I see you were not surprised by my description of the new Verlatin weapon."
"I'll be a much safer trip home, for both of us."

"I gather that's where we're headed?"
"Truth, Kees, I present you with Council orders."
Ian handed over the sealed packet and Kees opened it

carefully.

It was socied with Pride colors and made by hand, it was supposed to look impressive and inclinidating, and the desired effect was accomplished very well indeed.

TO: NYS' RED MOON KEES NYS COMMANDING FROM: NYS PRIDE COUNCIL

IN SERVICE TO THE PRIDE

Return Silfa system fastest safe route.

Accompany Red Sky direct to Council Hall to answer Verlain complaint. No other activity to be commenced or continued.

"You know more about this than what this order talks

"The Sun Clim has filed tharges against hoth of us for Manifast violations. I assume however that your Vorlatin computer records will clear us and form the hasis for a cross compliant." "Truly, Ian. You have access to all my tapes, Make

"Truly, ian. You have access to all my tapes. Make your own records in case one of us doesn't make it all the way home."

We will not speak of death, Kees. We must work as one now, to avence Arrodo. The saith before us is long and

one now, to avenge Appolo. The path hefore us is long sitch had. "Gatran understood why I was here. Now I understand you. Our trail is no longer blocked and I can now see the curves you traid to point out to me so many times. Thank you."

Inner you.

Inn only bowed, he's user lowered in deference.

Keen left the cubm with her honor gused trailing close
behand. All were silent as Kees burst through the docking port
to her own ship. She pranched in allship as she entered the
passageous pleading to the lift.

"Captain is onboard and off shift. Mnait retains command Mnait acknowledge."

Mnait answerd from the bridge. She could hear the clarity and determination in her captain's voice and know better than to impuie.

"Acknowledged, Hantress."

Kees would take these few hours for herself, she saspected they would be the last for a very long time.



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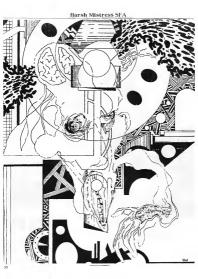
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## Jack The Martian

Don D'Ammassa Illustrations °1993 by Christopher Willingham

I suppose it's cynical to consider the repearance of a seeral billier on More evolution of the when we accordingly transplant furnam culture across the gap between worlds. Admittely, the psychologists responsible mover suggested that they were creating a new caylization from sensich, but they certainly repeated to the control of the control of the control personally, introduct that not the narrow medial focus of this specially. If they had constituted those of us who have smilled trunsa hattery, they might have adopted less grandsore plans from the outset. The higher the seprention, the greater the disappositionses.

disagonization.

Not it is explained that the hillings began in Bradboy, the
Not it is trappining that the hillings began in Bradboy, the
Not it is trappining that specified good supporting and supported by
twice that many smaller communities, plus countings
twice that many smaller communities, plus countings
other outposts of the human invasions scattered across the
other outposts of the human invasions scattered across the
other outposts of the human invasions scattered across the
population of approximately brought boosted, Bradboy would
have been a small bown back on Eirth, but here it was a major
more profit, the collected, commercing, and scientific contex of

the universe for a quarter million colonists.

It was also the hearing ground for a desanged killer.
The first victum's body was still warm when I reached the scene. Bob Winston, one of my sector supervisors, wanted at the foot of the access way ladder while I climbed down.

"What' to we got, Bob?"
"A mess, Ted. Over this way." We were in one of the montenance corridors benauth the northeast rampway, not far from the locks between domes six and seven. Judging by the much of cables that ran along the low cealing, this particular corridor provided access to the energy lankage from the core

A few moters further on, a coveralled body lay face down in a pool of bloom, and the control generation Martine, lived in Bradbory all his life except for a few months on temporary assignment in Betsoom. Two technicus were crossched over his body, while a their controlly blooming the entire procedure. Witston Switzered. Thou cut with a share instrument.

nature unknown. Fudging by the angle of the wound, I'd say the assessiblet came up from behand, reached over the right shoulder, and struck before the victim even times be was in sometime to the structure of a struggle. The autopy might bill us menting more.

I glanced around, trying to look professionally calling the contraction of the structure of the structu

S1799 to the Author, AS Elabor Research

Wineton refused to most my eyes; not emberrasument, just unease. "No one. The killer called it in."

"Do we have him?"

"No, but we have his name." Winston appeared to be incomfortable and waited to be prompted.
"All right. What's his reaso?"
"He save but have. Income the Martino."

The colonization of Mars had been a strange blend of pragmatism and visionary romanticsm. It had taken over a century before the first few settlements were oscentially self-supporting, and the capital cuttay had been so great, it would take at least that long again just to repay the principal, let alone the accumulated interest. There were few accountants on the oil classer get faced with the contract of the property of the contract of the co

the accumulated material. Inter were free accommand on the material of the second of the second of the second of At Its a state in time, the cet as those of a nell total, entransmentally behaved exceptants separated from Barth by a ppo of time, specia, and attatute was perhaps the most ambitious engineering project over undertaken by the human behavior engineering project over undertaken by the human behavior engineering project over the second of the barth Barnas of Fryschology was supposed to smooth over the contradictions and conflicts to the two states of personally interested productively, and at itself to date they had does so "I'm mittle proprised bothers, the conflict of "I'm mittle proprised bothers are the confli

In mining places and monthing, transplace occurried in Earth After gradualing. In a coupted a position, with Scourily here is Bradbury because I believed at would be a relatively indicated and particular and a complete a position with Scourily here is Bradbury because I believed at would be a relatively indicated and particular and a support of the colonization project. To my dismary, I discovered a latent trailent for dealing with becausing, and was now the youngest present over to serve a support of the property of the property of the project of the pro

Back on harth, that would be Cheel of Folice. We hold a would be Cheel of Folice. We hold a word had connectation which would not be helpful to the social climate, and "accurity" counts so much more reassuring Pethaps was commanded by an [tive years offworld, but to helpful to the continuous of the pethaps was commanded by an [tive years offworld, but to be performed to the pethaps with the pet

was at stars sold the incident mature too pairs. And was at stars sold the incident mature too pairs. And was you will be typing to decide whether or not to prease our manage contents. It was no armobb discussion, the two years gram that was about to expire that go no smoothly an pleasanably. We were friends, expected to remain to, even embandably, but mather of us was enterply recorded to even tembradily to mather of use was enterply recorded to extend the compromise moceanity to live legislar accordedly as the beliefing ood on any wintstoom makinds a propriety of

so. The killer called it in." and I touched the appropriate joon.

"Ted, this is Carol Chen. We've had another murder." She powed. "It's just like the last one." Policy was not to broadcast details even though the department wavelength was supposedly scottee. "Where?"

"Where?" "Between rows 346 and 347, Farm 14 Boh's already at the scene with his team." "All right, I'll roin him there."

An right, it is on min mere. The vicinity is in an interest to the vicinity and in the period of the vicinity and in the vicinity and vic

organic obless that fell or was thrown in by staff members transmig and wooding the gardens.

Eet assatistic haid approached from the rast, used one hand to gath the victim is been and feen the rail of who may employ to draw owner undestified sharp metrument across her throat. [Photo's blood had piepped across the ground and made long, dark stroked drawn the continuement wail, Security had been contained in the control of the

attack

Boh Winston didn't greet me this time, just stood
watching the technicians week, obviously uncomfortable.

Find anything?" I averted my eyes. Dibbas had been an
attractive somas, but now she lacked all humanity.

attractive woman, but now she lacked all humanity.

He shook his head. "Same as the other one."

"Might be coincidence," I suggested without conviction
whiston shook his head. "Same assessage as last time,
claims to be a REAL Maritan. I'd say we have a mut, the

That remained unprovers, but even though we disconsiderable cross referencing, our subspect are sentigations trand up to untile link between Dishwa and Vigerse Cha, the three were neverthely some connections. They lived a different neighborhoods, but they were both active separabilipation of the company of the control of the company of pullwar had originally worded an system maintenance, though not in the same sector as Cha, and switched to approxime a Brilliany. They was no originate that help had ever mo. We explored the tennous connections as far as we could, but without real though of influing applying. And we

acknowledging that the dashin were related, although currellify not draying the possibility of our of point until the fined market. Commercially and the proposal propular woman in Brachbury, She'd born electric to four consistentive terms on the city planning board, warming by a larger plinality than anyone in the proposal possibility of the propular planning board, warming by a larger plinality than anyone in the contract of the propular planning board, warming board, warming by lanning board, warming by a larger plinality than anyone and said killed during daylight, working in the possings storing man Noedless to any Society's was interpressing from all sides. Both co-mayons had managed to forget their joint vote of my proposal in the increase the number of executive junears.

Private property could not be kept under surveillance without

the owner's approval. Mossage volume was so great we were forced to finiter all monating calls through an Al descrimation to separate legitimate ones from public compliance and It was twice accorded in public places by rate extreme demanding to know why I hand be brought the killer to pastice.

To make things worse, someone as society leaked details we had hoped in keep to ourselve. Not only did the new limbs

To make things worse, someone in security leaked details we had begoed to keep to ourselves. Not only did the nesstraks report that the immediate had called as following each kill, they also know his weigh part, that the killer claimed to be a "rest" Maritan who would continue to kill until the human invaders were gone.

were gone.

Bradbury, hite all Martins cities, is a closed community.

Not that there son't frue trade with the rest of the demas, there's not such thing as nationalism or anything like that or Mart.

The Bureau of Psychology is very careful to neutralize anything that might contribute to repursalizes. Even aquireball issums are prohibited from having more than two players from

any single city. But since we can't breath the Martian atmosphere, every breach in the perimeter of our cities is monitored at all times. You can't enter or leave without identifying yourself unless you're smuerled in as cargo. There have been occasiona fugitives on Mars, but it's almost impossible to vanish here There are too many ways to trace a concealed human: an exchange rates, protein consumption. DNA tracking pedestrum character recognition programs, and so or Following Santiago's death. I received a grudging emergency appropriation to lease additional surveillance sampment from other cates, and authority to commandor nonosuntial monitoring outsiment from the private sector as well. We vory quickly increased our coverage of public areas from ten percent to approximately thirty-five, but the effect was even preater since we didn't need to cover heavily travelled rampways, public meeting places, the main commercial district, and other unlikely preying grounds

It was it enough to save the life of Reinhardt Wardorfsky, a fearthen year old butchered on the landing of an old carivallused as a shortout between home and the gymmassum, but what installed permanent traces on every public continuity and a strategorally placed team caught sight of the killer vaulting over the rampway guardeal. The team tende alertly posted the proposite over every every tax and called for

I came through the arrivok from Dome 4 just as they were opporting to go an after him. The figuitive had spotted the two security people sent to intercept and backtracked, then descended further min the bownes of Bradbury through the maintenance tunnels. When I head that, I referred the dome scaled off completity, even through that set of the emergency between the completion of the compl

every tunnel, compartment, connector, and tubeway as we went. It's a hewidecing world down below street level; Briddway is the oldest permanent settlement on Mars, and each new vision of what the city should evolve into was Built squeetly on top of the old. But coninc volume had always been at a permisma and there was little wasted space, for places to bade and all of them obviews. Or at least, that's what we

thought.

But we couldn't find our killer.

I endered a second aweep, convinced that we'd overlooked something, and my intuition proved right. Night was just falling outside when Winston reported they'd found a supposedly sealed hatchway which wasn't-- it had been tampered with. The had news was that it was a direct conduit into one of the advacent domes, hypassine the supposedly air tight dome seal. The good news was that it led into Farm 2 Although Bradbury looks anything but symmetrical from overhead, there is actually a pattern to its development. There is a central core of linked domes which bouse commerce.

industry, entertainment, and covernment services. Additional domes along the southern periphery are primarily residential. those alone the north agricultural and scountific. Farm 2 was one of the oldest and largest of the northeide domes, but it was also one of the very few that had only a single link to the rest of the city. In other words, it was a dead end. And a sparsely

Since our quarry could not have returned to the main caty whale the seal was in place, we moved our operation to the Farm 2 airlock area. There was no certain way to know how many people were legitimately inside the agricultural dome. but night shift had started and there wasn't likely to be more than a skeleton crew

We evacuated the staff systematically, screening each individual in case the killer was one of their number. Fortunately for us, no one had wanted to work alone since Dilbwa's death, so we had little difficulty clearing everyone assigned to Farm 2 for the shift. Then we sent in the search It was only a matter of time. Farm 2 is the largest of the arricultural habitats, but it was laid out to be easily maintained.

We flushed the killer less than halfway through the sween and vectored the other teams to intercent every possible escape route. As chance would have it, I was with the stuad of five who saw the end from closest at hand Our "Martian" headed almost directly to the north side of the dome, where the irrigation system rushed through an artificial streambed into the jaws of the recyclers. When a furtive figure emerged from a cluster of fems only a few meters from our position, we drew our flechette guns, the heaviest weaponry allowed inside a dome. Without

acknowledging our shouted orders to surrender, the killer ran across the assle and climbed the sandcrete abutment above the I'm not exactly certain what happened next. Another squad burst into sight further along the perimeter and turned in our direction. The killer, still unidentifiable despate the artificial lighting, seemed to hesitate and then, so quickly that we all froze, stunned, was gene. I rushed to the scene and scrambled up onto the abutment, stared down just in time to

see what might have been a single flailing arm disappear under the threshing jows of the nearest bank of recyclers. Officially, it was listed as death by mischance, although it might possibly have been suicide. Nor did we over learn the identity of Mars' first sorial killer. Despite basing the most closely monitored population in human history, we were unable to discover, even indirectly, the name of the person we chased that night.

It took a while to accept that attraction. There are close to a quarter million people on Mars, after all. But we accounted for every one of the twenty thousand currently listed as resident in Bridbury; no one was missing. As much as we would like to remain confident about the security system, it had somehow been breached.

So we expanded our search to every installation on Mars. and quickly eliminated all but a few dozen poorle, mostly

prospectors who hadn't bothered to maintain radio contact. By the end of the year, there were only three names left, a party of scientists believed lost in the Great Canyon region. Their bodies were found a few months later There were theories of course. The least practical was a stowaway from Earth. The most popular, despute densals from

Data Management, was that some backer had found a way to excase himself or herself from the system so completely that no trace of identity remained behind. There were even some who believed that the murderer had been an unrecorded birth sheltered by parents for some arcane reason, grown to maturity without the social conditioning that maintains the stability of our framle culture.

I have only recently begun to suspect the truth administration. I was pressured into remaining as Chief of Security even after my term expired; submission to social pressure is a key part of our psychosocial conditioning. Then a seat on the Bradbury City Council, appointment to the planetwide Development Board, and so on. In short, I was not able to return to my love of history until my retirement from

public service just last year Gilwright and Kubisawa's definitive history of our colony preempted my original plan to produce an equivalent work and I became committed to a new project, essentially my personal memours. The work was rewarding and went quite rapidly until I reached the year of the killings The Security records were quite complete. I reread the

site reports, the autopsies, my own logs, and replayed the newsnet coverage. Even after a gap of more than half s lifetime, those events seemed real, distinct, hard edged, still vaguely ansettling. What I discovered next was more startling. Despite my skopticusm about the efficacy of many policies enacted by the Bureau of Psychology, they indisputably maintained a meticulous set of records of human activity, in mass terms. Many of these had been restricted even from the Chaef of Security until the Freedom of Data Act a few years earlier, so it was with some curiosity that I downloaded and began to examine some of the files from that period. I was expecting too find a sharp increase in mental disturbances

during the period directly following the Jack the Martson Over the course of the two years immediately preceding those unfortunate events, the incidence of neuroses and neychoses had been on a sharp urward curve, so sharp in fact that I detected serious concern expressed with mounting anxiety in the archival notes. Ten days prior to the first murder, the Bureau's Board of Governors was considering declaring a Psychological Emergency and taking direct control of colony affairs under the now defunct Cultural Emergency

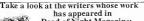
killings. What I found was exactly the opposite

Code The trend began to reverse steelf after Nguyen Chu died, declined slightly further when Joyce Djibwa was slaughtered, and dropped dramstically with the death of Conne Santiago. Remhardt Warshofsky's demise directly preceded a reduction

to acceptable levuls. I though about that for some time, read a number of scholarly studies examining the phenomenon, all of which concluded basically that while the initial increase in mental unrest was almost certainly a kind of planetary cabin fever, no one really understood why the disorder reversed itself. Several files made reference to the Jack the Martian killings as a symptom of the problem, but none suggested what I now suspect is the real explanation.

I don't think Jack the Murtian ever really existed. I think he was a mass debision, an artifact of the minds of all of me her on Mars, a device by which we dissipated a growing, unrecognized resistance to psychological control. But a debision so unlesse that it could jurisely interact with our environment, interact powerfully enough to be seen, heard, and to take four human lives.

And if I'm right, what form will our next mass hallurination take? Are the increasingly frequent reports of movement in the Martian deserts appair and? Are we truly the schabbanes of Mars, or are we in the process of creating them?





## Dead of Night Magazine:

Janet Fox, David B. Riley, Gnry Braunbock, Ralph E Vaughan, John B. Rosenman, Mort Castle, Frank C. Gunderloy, Katherine Rumsland, Neal Hawes, Kathryn Piacek, John Maelay, Robert Baldwin, David Niall Wilson, Richard T. Chizmar, Jacie Ragan, Michael A. Arnzen, and many, many others!

In the Fall/Winter '93 issue, Dead of Night will feature fiction, articles, book & film reviews, and other goodies by. Steve Rasnic Tem, Namey Kilpatrick, Scott Thomas, J.N. Williamson, Richard F. McGonegal and others, along with artwork by Allen Koszowski, Alfred Klotterman, Marge Simon, Pius, right inside the magazine, there will be a 'Special Surolement, featurine folioidar tales of sterror by J.N. Williamson,

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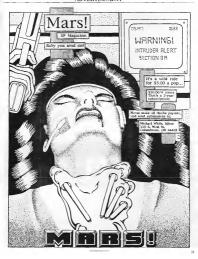
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booklet' for writers, 51.69.).



Harsh Mistress SFA



# VIRTUAL SUCCESS

BY Larry Miles and Brian D. Gairdner Illustrations © 1993 by Timothy A. Ballou



the tot the attract on the rubber pad she had had down as a precaution. She clonched her glowed left hand and pointed it at the attract while using her other hand to press a small beatim on her held-two knuckle nozelasi opsaed, and a concentrated balts of air cleared wavy the last of the fine, black hunar dust.

"Audio, law four. Base Op, thank you for your cooperation. I am tray you can see for yourselves with we have uncovered." specing the angry squarks from the behine racis, Dr. Lans Wisson milled, Her City-Dung's flowery date stacks, Dr. Lans Wisson milled, Law Cyl-Dung's flowery date had opted to work this smaller, low-glumcown field. Else mund it with the sur-low-logd enth is the remains of a long-shandourd alion outport, or a perhistoric dig on Earth—d' you found the dung, you would discover a treasm tower of having and Lond-logic. Again tuning or all Base Openations, the Color of the Color of the State of the State, the grander

foot. Closing her eyes and maching for the stars, she grauned loudy and stretched until her aching hack canciled in welcome relief. Clumsify shaking her numb tags, she opened her eyes and stared into the face of Medium Earth. Larsa could usually find a few moments to stand quietly and entire the manuscient type of the frome weeds. But not

today. Topping her field brush against the silvary leg of her surface-survival suit, the looked at the prize that restod at her foot. Although the round crystal surface was scenariod- and potted, the shope was turnisticable—a helment, slightly large by human standards; but nevertheless, an alten spacefaser s headeast, complete down to the finded symbols still pursuits.

legible across its cracked visor.

A good smile copt scores Lam's face. Other than the modphile, storcute behind pit, the helmet the half uncovered was the first index alms artists of the expedition. After dropping a brighted of marker beauco beside the beliest. Lam sat on the deedge of her dense beggy and looked toward the mans work area three disclimateers away: she the circus at the main project. Amidet a dozen hashipconstructed environment of the contraction of the circus at the main project. Amidet a dozen hashipconstructed enviro-pole haseath an outcrap of minister laws.

rock, the partially-exposed crystal structure stood under the flavor of eight basis of flood lamps, the mysterious edificsite of the partial properties of the structure of the still cleng stableomy to its secrets, revealing almost nothing, remaining an imprograble puzzle. Men, some all his toolifron the intrinsity ophthecistic to the breathy openetic—had only success hall four in chipping away the laws rock that had flowed strond the guint crystal secretare came ago. 201 at 10 cm.

flowed around the gunt crystal structure came age. But all that had changed with the news of this morating's dramatic discovery.

As the first field crew coulinely began the daily task of clearing more of the moon rock, a thin dark line was uncovered at the ground line of the dip. All work came to an alwept half while the senter archaeolorsets convided actional with classical

while the sentor archaeologists on wield around with classes. The occitoment grow as orders were grown to set up the sonic pulsar. even before a final laser hists cleared meny a subborn sish of gay cook, the pulsar went to work. Momenta inter, through all the choirs, the word was out; the long-hoped laser than the substitution of the substitution of the cook of th

to be a large one, she shrugged her absordlers and percosoled to her dig. It looked like it would be days before entry was achieved, but her project was going to been frist this very day. With everyone whooping it up. Lann had quotkly lost patience with the stricket in her helmest and blatturly, against Limits procedure, shatt down her audio-link. Hours had gone by and her only contact had been with Base Op-and even that

had been spondic.
Gene some was the feverish chatter of earlier in the day,
replaced by the normal hum of archaeological
communications. As a veteran field worker, Laus had known
it was only a matter of time before Lankie, would stop in and

it was only a matter of time before LunEx would step in and cool the entitiessem with a "Dead slow—Proceed with extreme Cartison" command. Noticing extra fielders at the main dig. Lana closed her even to avend vertice and sroke into her helmet. "Visual

magnify to the tenth power."

She waited for her visor to click twice infore the operacl her eyes. It was as if she were in the middle of the dig action. At a glastic, she saw that the extra personnel waren't working as finishers, but as a makeshiff amene crew. Lane chuckled, it wouldn't be like bridget-minded Lumik not to take advantage of the situation. She was star the latter news had already been

bram-blasted back to Earth.

Lata was almost firmband loading her dure buggy when
something at the coenter of her visor caught her attention.

Someone was watching her. Again! Loading up one the top of the cytral fortness, the saw a solitory figure. Not warning to
the back her and the saw as a solitory figure. Not warning to
goe hum, the chanced a boat of names and, with the types
open, anal., Visual, magnity, levelfth power. The visit
make our overy detail of the lone occurrer.

RAWLINGS, stencilled in red across the left chest sate the front of the helmest. Rawlings spin—standing saws from the crowd...watching. Even though the was a few killemeters sawy. Lana knew the figure was staring back at her. "Base Op, thus in Dr. Witton...still in sector 3A-09. It would like a two-man retrival team out here to prick up my

marked specimen, also, could you give me access to the day notes.

The Lunar landscape shimmered and went out of focus.
Caught unawares, Lana started to check her monitors for malfunctions; then she realizes. No! Not now!

Knowing the was lest than thirty seconds from SEP termatates, Lena agan tried to fix Rawlings in the visor screen. For a moment the thought she might have look limit, it indeed it was a "limit." But not-there he was, making his way down the nody alogo. As if he were aware that it was his turn to he scrutinared he stopped in male step and looked right back at her. Just before its remaination, Limit are when my service as the way are the stopped in many the my service as we again the many services as we again to the scrutinary of the same way to be a supplemental to us in the same than the same than

"Rawlings..." Lairs nurmared as she came out of hee simulated life fractory. She stretched deeper into he recluses and waited the few munutes it would take her mind to ready; to readily. When the nurses had almost subsided, she recicked hask, peeled sawy the patch of Dermodyn that covered the maps of her neck, and emoved the neural jack—one of the most reductal normal union renductal by GenTure Construct.

Staking her head at the memory of Rawlins, Laira De Witte looked at her flatiscreen. Another near-flawless performance. Seventy more minutes of production time and her latost simulation, "ALJEN FORTRESS ON LUNA," would be in the bag. If her project's leading character, DR, Lana Witton, was as well received in this fantasy as in her debut adventure simulation. Laira's future would be looking good. Now if the people in GenTape Program Security were doing their sobs, they should have a lead on the intruder who had hacked into bur fantasy

looking at the high stats again. Laim got the feeling it was no ordinary chopper who bad invaded ber project. There hadn't been the slightest disruptive ripple in any of ber overlays. No, this was no ordinary Tom. Smooth and mysterious...yes, but ordinary...no way! Blinking suddenly. Laria looked around her. She had been so wrapped up in the fantasy creation that she only now realized that the work room was almost empty. Usually, "The Pit" was a bub of activity with more than forty fantury writers

trying to keep up with the domaid for good-quality simulated lives. Now other than the small knot of writers at the adult. entertainment workstations, the room was deserted. One look at the control panel told the story. Not only was it well past shift down, but the outdoor environmental mater was in the bright rads again. "Shit." Lairs cursed aloud. If the air gets any worse, she thought, I eather sleep in the emergency dorm downstairs or use a knife to cut my way home. She logged into security and reported the program breach before closing her workstation. Then, when the surveillance camera swung the other way, she scooped her implant and tossed it into her x-ray-eroof quilt-pak.

On ber way to the lockers, Lama glanced at the porn boys and stuffed the sweet smell of loffe. One of them smiled and held up a tubular glass pape. Still slightly dazed from the SLF. Laira slipped with, "Thanna no... gonna home." She had barely passed by when she heard their laughter. Fuckers! Laugh at her fiastSade pedgin chat, would they? Well, she would show them, she would show them all, she might not have a fancy education, but her writing was better. and she wasn't sitting up half the night, stoned on industrial slavs, writing cheap portto fantasies, sure, she was going home to EastSide, but that wouldn't always be the case.

Laira was still fuming when she slammed ber locker door. She rashed to the exit elevator, her poncho swishing with every step. She had no sooner stepped into the GenTapp lobby, when, through the large electro-charged plantful doors. she saw a transpo pulling up to its secured step. Her rubber boots made a heavy, dell sound as she run to the final security checknoint. As she stock her left hand into

the ID box, she winked at the larger of two yellow-uniformed "Night now, cha's. See you morn." Their matching tattooed left ears remanded Laira that she was not the only EastSider working at the taren. "Yoppo, marm, coulds gets tamptank ride home, if

sycuraty men

"Nay-ob, thank. Big boy show transan the light new, so as knows in coming," lilted Laira. One smell of the outside sir made Laira wish she could

bave taken the offer of a ride bome in one of GenTapp's security mobiles. But thinking about the borrowed neroimplant enhancer in her bug made her opt for the doubtful comfort of public transport "Hey-O, marn," yelled the other security guard after ber.

"Hear news of the Mateus...they all take now by the troon. Lagra shook her head at the news and boarded the waiting bus. As she sat at the back of the transport, she thought about the Mateus Minutemen-sust another dreav.

obscure gang of radical environmentalists. No, the real news was that this was the sixth group of this sort rounded up this month. Estab peace Forces were winning victory after stancine victory

As the bus rolled out into the smog-bound street. Lairs sat back and turned on the video strip that was set into the back of the seat in front of her. Optime for the news strip, she fastforwarded through the international blits and focused on the local news. The piece on the Mateus was short and did no give much information, except that the cane had been inffitrated and arrests had followed. Next came a blit on local politicos toasting the opening of a new underground toxic waste facility and touting the financial benfits the area would receive. Large lost integrat for at least two more related stems. then watched as the words "WebbCore Fantasy Games" ran across the strip. After turning the audio as high as the unti allowed, she learned that GenTapp's small, but peaky competitor-at least in the fantasy area-had their books sayzed by the IRS. The newscaster's voice said the information came

from an anonymous tap, probably from a disgruntled employee Lairs turned down the volume and sank back into her seat. Some months ago, when she finished the rough draft of her first som, she had almost gone to WebbCore. A few of her friends worked there and enjoyed the creative freedom, bu Lasra had applied and had been accepted by GenTapp. On the down side, the atmosphere was restrictive, with your only security being the quality and salability of your present project on the upsale, at was leading edge. Besides, being a successful writer at GenTapp Construct had another very-important advantage: You needed more than just a big bag of credits to move out of HastSide District-otherwise all the Slackers dealers would have left long ago-you needed your exp application approved, and with GenTapp Construct Issered across the official form, accordance was a mere formality Thinking about the day's events at WebbCore, Lagra

automatically wondered about Garland Shaid. He had been her main reason for even giving WebbCore a second look. But in the end, even a relationship with their brightest programmer wasn't worth ditching ber primary goal in life-to get out of the overpopulated sprawl of the EastSide. At least they were still friends, and tonight Laria would call on that friendsbup. She was sure Garland would be able to fill her in on the news blu about WebbCore, and besides, be was an excellent scanner Maybe he could find out how an intruder managed to chop into

Lairs looked outside at the grimy streets. She still had a long way to go before she got the the BastSide District. After punching in her destination on the control pad on the arm rest. and stuffing ber quilt-pak into the corner of her seat, Lairs decided to nun Some time later, she woke with a start. Instinctivley reaching under her, she found her has safe. The soft green

light in her arm rest glowed softly, assuming her that she bad not slept past her point of destination chime. It took her a moment to figure out what had woken her. The transport...it wasn't moving, or even silling. Ah shat, she thought. The bus was down. Pressing her face to the window, Laira looked toward the frost of the transpo and ber mood brightened. She was only a few blocks from home. She caressed ber bag, took anothe peek outside, and made her decision: She would walk. Standing up. Laira caught the driver watching box through his year-view mirror. Feeling his eyes on her, she

From behind the scuffed piexi shield, she beard has

### Harsh Mistross SFA

anxious voice. "Hey, Citizen, what do you think you're doing? Please remain setted. We'll be out of here seen enough." For the moment, Lairs chose not to answer. She took a wrinkled take from her hag and smeared a layer of Demneso on her face and hands. After tossing the tube back into her hag, she pulled out her black ShellTech rowrlay, set the light drail to low, and put them on.

Then, looking like a mutant housefly, Laira turned to face the driver. She rattled the security har on the sale door. 'I'm really wantin' homeplace. Three block so the hadge. Come on now, cha-cha: let eo."

Laira hadn't made it ten paces from the transe when her eyes-even behind her protective goggles-started to water and sting. She let out a disgueted gasp; she couldn't helieve how foul the our tasted tonight. This had to be some kind of record.

even for her stinky neighborhood. Looking over her shoulder, peerme through the soung smog, Laira could still make out the darkened shape of the stalled steel-plated bus. Rittery faces, made fuzzier by the swirling mist, stared back at her through the took safethy glass. the sicly yellow of the bus' interior lights forming flickering halos accound their heads Clutching her hag while carefully payagating around the

studgy, water-filled potholes, Laira silently becated herself for her impatience, after all, in these troubled times it would only have been a matter of manutes before an armed charger responded to a "bus down" message. Not that the transpo people cared about their passenger load-it was the bus itself they worried about. A response time of longer than twenty mirrotes usually meant that they might as well bring another set of tires. The stolen rubber from one of those but beasts would supply sandals for any of the EastSide gangs for at least a

nsonth Laira looked up from the wet pavement and let out a sigh of relief. She was almost to the bridge, and once over, she would be bome

Whow! Even through her nose-plugs the stench of the FastSide River assaulted her nostnis. After winner the oritre studge from her goggles, she looked up to see the late-summer sun fighting a losing hattle with the fat, low-hanging storm clouds. The ensuing sunset gave the slow-moving, mucky-gray

waters a dull, reddesh cast that remended her of draud blood And to think that fish used to live in that water-and people When she reached the other side of the span, Laira sensed trouble. She looked to the right just in time to elimnac a black shape ducking into a darkened doorway. A few

seconds later, and to her left this time, came the unmestakable sound of someone steeping on broken glass. "Shift" she said aloud, more in sanoyance than fear. Straight ahead, through the increasing gloom, were the glassteel entry doors of her homeplace. Reaching into her pack, though louthe to expose the enhancer to the fool outside air, Laira fumbled around for her prod-rod. Closing her hand

on the black metallic cylinder, she smiled slyly and essed it out of it's protective sheath. These cha-cha's were in for a summer, even if they were wearing sturner wests. Her soundup version of the prod packed almost enough power to short out a medium-sizzed crowd-dispersal tank. Laira sensed her unseen stalkers closing in on her. She forced berself to walk steadily toward the dim lights of her homeriace, all the while tightening her grip on both the pack

setd the beavy cadmium rod Without warning, a bright quartz light cut through the gloom and contered her in its stark white beam. Larra switched off her Shelltoch meter and hraced herself for an attack. Instead she heard the sound of her would-he attackers scurrying for cover. Moving out of the spotlight, Laira stril had to shield her eves while she studied the hright-yellow mobile idling at the

side of the road. Judging by the factory gleam, and the particular shade of yellow, at could only he one of GenTapp's

upper-echolon security cars. Not relinquishing her grap on the grod, now hidden under the flap of her poncho, Laira walked slowly past the vehicle and nodded to the invisible figures she knew were watching from behind the mirrored plate. As she reached the front of her huilding, she placed her hand into the ID slot, and the first of

two steel-and-plass doors swang open. Sticking her hand into the second ID slot, Laura waited for the remiercad steel door to open. The metal door notally opened, but as usual, it got stuck part way along its track. It took a reactived shoulder to randon it open the rost of the way As the door clanged shut behind her, Lairs heard the high whose of the car as at slowly raised itself on it's cushion of air. Comous, Lairs opened the motal neek slot in the inner door and watched the share prowl car hover slowly to the center of the bridge. Once there, it reused for a moment before

speeding off into the thick mist Laura stood riveted to the door, replaying the last few minutes in her mind. Cold sweat trickled down her ribs as she thought of the stoken unhancer in her bog. But if the company suspected she had taken the sophisticated piece of hardware, why hadn't they taken her in? It wasn't because they were afraid of legal entanglements. GenTapp was a power unto

"Strange..." Laws whispered as she unsnapped her goggles. Upon entenny her homoplace. Larra kicked off her smelly outboots and shucked off her pencho. Carrying them at arms length, she went to the hathroom and placed them in the filed shower stail. Reaching past a squat tube of shampoo and varyous creams, Lasra retrieved the large, red bottle of Polu-Rines and sneaved a liberal amount on her boots and her

poncho.

"Facking hoots great't even two months old." she said while examining the melt marks on the heels and soles. Calculating how much water crudit she had left for the month, Lairs set the shower timer and closed the door. She looked at the mirror and shook her head. It was a good thing she had used the dermal cream before leaving the has. As she waped her face clean, she thought back to last weak when someone had stolen her weather most. Tomorrow she would key a new one. Reaching under the counter, Lairs got out a black-market hottle of AcquaCleanse and took a long drink. Coughing heavily, she hacked up a thick wad of phlogm and spit it in the sink. God! She had to get out of here; it was literally killing

Back in the main room, she looked toward her computer "Spedie, open your eye. Access project Luria." instantly, Laira's flatscreen came to life. The hrightyellow Gentapp copyright notice appeared on the screen

followed by the white, flashing words, "ALIEN FORTRESS ON LUNA. Created by Laura Do Witte." Laira sat in her recliner and tanned a counte keys to change form werbal to keyhoard command. She scrolled back

to the end of yesterday's work and watched her on-screen character, with a green Earth as a backdrop, just starting on the



final dig for the short halmet. Lara glaced at the accions digwatch tiped to the upper corner of her computer. She knew the last perion of fantasy time would take almost four boxes of real time to watch, odit, and then splice in with today's sequence.

Refore starting work on the tim. Laise surgered her

eramped aureundings. She had scored the strictly-two-pensor living unit with some fast talking and some ungaritying sex. She momentarily frounded at the memory, that it was becoming such a common pencific these of lays, and boudes—athlough at made her angry to flunk about is—it was worth it. In like that the posterior of the common terms of the common terms of the posterior and the common terms of the common terms of the posterior and the common terms of the common terms of the posterior and the common terms of the common terms of the posterior terms of the common terms of the things of the common terms of the common terms of the common terms of the things of the common terms of the common terms of the common terms of the terms of the common terms of the common terms of the common terms of the terms of the common terms of the common terms of the common terms of the terms of the common terms of the common terms of the common terms of the common terms of the terms of the common terms of the common terms of the common terms of the terms of the common terms of the common terms of the common terms of the terms of the common terms of the common terms of the common terms of the terms of the common terms of the com

work this.

Taking page on one corner of the table was her HeadMoust rock with one used, black multi-viscord ancest and the seawned party of a last after more. Bealth for any was not received to a last after more. Bealth for any was overbailed so many times that the doubled agrone from overbailed so many times that the doubled agrone from Minosa Computers would recognize it as one of their own. Beaks the computer were her many sufference impliests and one of gree 2003 frames party-like scale paper books when the control of th

page covered in protective laminate.

Laira looked around and smited. It wasn't much, but for a single person in Eastfole, it was a lot better than most. Well, she thought, it won't be much longer before I'm out of this durant.

Getting the borrowed bis-soft impliant from her pair, later acceled behind her note, people back her neck putch, and sugged the ethinacer into her attend dock. She attached on another and into the computer. She then returned the dark plasses that daughed from the decopities and plagged the sized plasses that daughed from the decopities and plagged the sized plasses that daughed from the decopities and plagged the sized rates of over just his start on the glasses. She was attend strained over just his test on the glasses. She was attend to the sized of the sized of the sized of the sized of the she still preferred them, and they helped her edst more throughly. Six wathed he lime simulation for a few mannes, the remembered that he was going to sail Garinal "Spainty, solution to train and fronce." Resulting that she had switched to framman Line superinterly keyed in the commands. The left corner of the sevens blanked sets a four-work square feet of the sevens blanked sets a four-work square feet under higher and the sevens blanked sets a four-work square feet under higher and the seven set of the seven shows the set of the standard spaint and under the seven set of the seven set feet to seven set of the seven set feet feet of spainters members across the lift feet of the optic scanners. On the third log-on attempt, size got her constitution.

constant a near time to the control of the control

The face on the screen broke into a thin smile. "That's men his it. Good to see yoo. Head you were working day and might on a new sim. How a it coming?"
"Well, it is and it spirt. I turn is almost finithed, and it think it's the best work I've over done. Hell, never mind the each credits, it would mean a person to the daytim deramsing's, and that would get me out of the Bast Distrest—but like I said, there is a resolution—if a been choosed."

"introducil". You've hidding, I shought all you Tuppers used private dismain observation from a stocked pool; used private dismain observation from a stocked pool; so for they've come up empty. I checked for moids and varial smyself, nothing. Thought—no make that hoped—dast it was a regular overlay glish, but then it happened again rades), It's are extra characterization, and a weied one at that." Gairlant orbited his reper with the halls of his firsts and

granted. "Well that kind of changes things--and deepens the

mystery."
"What do you mean? What mystery?"

"We are having the same problem at Wohleness oncome with one very ophilizated equipment is primagation or units. We assumed it was one of your Genlines pure, using their note secret Richayle of Chip based adapters, but in case you didn't hear the news today, we have more important through to worry about now. Still, it is a mystory. And there are all those other strange things, like the strange through t

reachesquis boulding his way quases so so, mere as reaches Laire (all barrell beginning to flath. The refinance to her GenTape spice want fair. Menths ago, when she and Garland had a sting going, he had assumed she would be working at WobbCore with him and the rust of the Euriside Intravy writers. Laira know that when she had open Gentlappy, Garland for the thick had odd out. Well fish, ham the still be the still be the still be the still be the still takelytic light common who had we haded. Out if you that

probing at.—
"Whosa, Jook, I'm sorry about that. I forget that you've turned into quate the company dan over them." Holding up his banks in mock arrandon. Gatfand and, I'm at theme you I have been a surface of the second of th

joung, Lasra was back in her reofiner. She popped open a plastic container and was serrounded by the small of frush apples "OK, shoo. Wha its mon pallo cha?" Lisin gugled at the look of dismay on Garland's face. "I am so sorry," she said with exaggerated precision. "Perhaps we could now containe our very internation conversables."

we could now contains our very intercentage conversation, as the property of the containing of the co

only politically regit. The wave states to extract a clear that a contract a clear that a clear

communication has been been assumed as a second state of the second state of the control of the

turned him in was him, and he owears he never said a word to auguser."

"Didn't you say he was a wire? You know they can't he trusted-snyhow, it's not that I'm not sympathetic, but could you please have a look at my program? I want to hand it in temorew—complete and bug froe."

"Well, it's not your sympathy I want, it's your objectively. Lock at all the arrests lately, and in each and every case, those arrested are enemies of your company or-Garland saw Latar's frown and shifted geas. "Sorry...I know it sounds like paramon to you." Latar saddenly felt draumel, her stim-more only lowing

it sounds like puranous to you."

Lazar suddenly feit drauned, her stim-jucce only leaving her with a jugged edge. With a sugle of exceperation she said, "Lock, maybe we can talk about this in a day or as. I just want to get my proped dons. If you can't or won't help me-just tall

"Lairn, Larm...all work, but sare; I will uploud it to my leadddount, just in case. The last thing I need is for my Max to get anfected. Who knows where I will be working next shift Ramsons say that the Tapp is ready to take us over--and by the way, what coding numbers are you sending to your neural these days—a one seven, or are you hot-dogging into the two sheekel?"

these days—a one seven, or an you hol-degging into the town. I have been seven to a seven or an you hol-degging into the town. I have been seven the seven three or three or "Three! What do you mean three" Are they all cray or an ignat you? He was 1 you have the thin the town the seven three or the seven three or the seven three or the seven three testing. What about the caraness, vomiting, and disciontation. Did you know these were people using unit-town who couldn't find their own memories for day? "Day town who could be in the seven three or the seven the seven the seven the seven the seven that the three was memories for day?" They was the seven the seven the seven three three three seven the seven three thr

your belowed Gern's app with all #'s immedic ear! I get the Fields in move on this one. Our land plotwered at her. "The next timing you? be using will be one of the boods; kinckly, ear. "The season of the boods; kinckly, ear. "And the season of the boods; kinckly, ear. "And "Field, "Ear. —mone, so you seem now, forget palle." Not She wouldn't jury hum the satisfaction. Taking a deep breath, the started again. "Gelfand, stop tyring to omediter me, and the started again. "Gelfand, stop tyring to omedite me, and Frent behind her eyes, the could feel a major throbbing begin. Oth shit. I'm sow, I Lanew you are only triping."

more that the studies program of year of year of year of the Prem behind her eyes, the could feel a major throbbeing begin. 'Oh shit. I'm sorry. I know you are only trying.'Christad Shand's face hearne hard. 'It will take me some time, through my mount, 'he saak, heting off every word.'
'I don't want some weind, sicko Tapp mold clogging up my Max. Later.'

"Gane...' Lairs was talking to a enw sorren.

"Gan.— Lans was talking to a psy screen. She signed deeply and file the ruleshes nearly coming cra. along with a large does of the public. She fill had lovel common the public of the public of the land lovel composed with the land lovel composed with the land lovel composed with the land lovel public developed seaso of lonests, chances as the wood lanve tumod but m. Too bad, as he had always been there for the rand had more been passed of the fact that has wantee cracture. Reld, then had been a turn when, with his support program analysis and he cractive shall, they had talked door opening a small,

and her creative skills, they had talked about opening a small improductions house in the EstSide.

Lama removed the implant from her neck and turned it over in her hands. Running her fingers over the howord, by marvelled at the perfect blend of hard, glistening metal and soft, dill-gray plastique. On impulse, she took the nutral derives to ber work bench and set it down. Studying it, she runninged around in her tool box, thinking about having one

httle peck into the inner workings of this top-of-the-line device. Before she started, through, Less headed back into her hathroom. Reaching under a small stack of missmatched towis, she retrieved a small package of black-market derms, extracted one ferout the foum holder, and quarkly chipped at to her ear. Her beades he would be gone in moresus. With this me of a few pre-calibrate took, one entire the his-

with the use of a tew specialized tools, openling the thissoft was a matter of going through the motions, but rootine ended there. "Darm." Larra said under his breath, curenighereiff for agoing with garland. He could have told her what a linked-pair of SLX-DS storage/bransfer chips were doing in her atolan his-off.

Tapping her scrowdraver against the workbench, Lainwondered what two hrutally expensive MildSpec chaps were doing in a fastasy enhancer. Something wasn't right here. Fungering the deem-chy dangling from her earlobe, Laura gauged her mood and level of alectness hefore making her docision. She reached for her black glasses and chipped the small

alligstor clamp to the small, green crystalline were pointing the storage chaps. Checking to make sure that her spliced were was connected to both her educed a glasses and her computer, Lams sought the SLX's command sequence. Surprisingly and without any attempt at code cracking, the send and erase codes

floobed up on her flatscreen.

She read the command lines twice before realizing she wen't breathing. "Son of a litich..." she magnitud then look a deep breath.

Interior in the time on her topod digit, Lieta counted bottes on her finguise before eating suite her glauses and droug tunder her wordshacht. Hurrolly the simplied the contains of case of cetter data descripted by the simplied the contains of case of cetter data descripted they. Seeking up an antique hard drive, shie gave it only a moment's thought before casing a dead. Thank Charat he do drive have to depend on one of these relies to store her data, or Getting out from under her bench Lieta harged her head to hard the new stars. Curring soundly, their hardy of the head to hard the new stars. Curring soundly.

she general the pain and went to work.

A few horse later, she dropped her scrawdriver and
waited for the soldering row to cool before dumping it back
unto her tool how. Her own Spider now had the functional
equivalent of an SLX. Glancing again at the time, Lara
surpped on her glasses and re-said the lines of information the
commanded those sophisticated computer chaps. Smiling
lightly, she reached for her keyboord and made a few small

additions to the those community.

When she was finished, Laura slowly removed her glasses and cracked her knuckles. Nothing lieft to do, she thought, except just the implant back together. After she rightmed the last seal of the haz-ooft and heard the small bears of are that told her the RikoKya Enhancer was conce again stant and securally sealed, she lief her shoulders drop and begain to

her. Illegal—but so was his pawing her every month.

Laira instructed her computer to refuse all incoming messages, except any from Garland—and would she have

something to tell him later—and went hack to her small bathroom. She could tell by the artificial clean smell that he outserware would be ready for tomorrow. Reaching under the same stack of towels, she retrieved another deem, this cent to allow her to shoup for a few boars and then wake up feeling alset and rented—or so the advecturers cleaned. Then she pulled off her clother and pudded naded into the many prom.

With one jump, the landed in the middle of her reclaims. On simpless, the probled a second view term and slagged to the reclaims. On the problem is the problem in the problem in the problem in the problem is the problem in the problem in the problem in the problem is the problem in the prob

vince, the watched as image of herealf publishing a bortch-wince cannot use a plead labe. Within sociate, the imagesy flooted her research. Her standy, chyfmine publishing had her stances to me breith removed a layer of cloud. Stilleding her eyes, she confided the publish on her lip and pluxical is pair of gold awayed please. Thus the lab threats point of the residue-vene. and gold awayed of Emission, the contract of the residue-vene. The contract of the publishing of the pub

Square Pike looked helmed him to the small hand of men binddled by the fireplace; then his eyes were drawn to his manter, Ser Alathan, who lay with his eyes cloud, wrapped in his bloodenmed feet. The basiler had does his bost. It was up to a Alashane is sterength now Pike abook his host. It was up to Alashane is sterength more Pike abook his host. It was up handled, another loss. How long could they right out How long handled the second picket has been seen as the picket has the picket had been picket by the For draw the sizes and more and Winterchild, troops had

taken turns satting their lives macroble. Early this afternoon, a hard wand had blown in from the north, pressing the storm which his two hours before nightfull—anothers storm, the hard people dard in, constitures no more than fifty feet from their bosons. Shortly after the storm bogun, the dark rider appeared once again, refung tall on his handloon, thick may be a supplement of the storm bogun, the contract of the storm bogs and the bow, but had been supplemented by the storm of t

"Hold, my loyal friend," he said. "The black knight has shown us no harm or ill intent." Baller scowled. "Neither has he made his purpose or his person known to us." With one plance form Alashame's eyes, Balor fell kilent.

He lowered has bow but kept it in his band.

Showing no sign of concern, the lone knight raised his sweed and pounded to the east. To a man, all eyes followed his lead. From where they stood shivering, they could see only more snow, a fire small hills, and fewer pines.

"Salor, Girmahaw--to me. We notk in that direction. The rost follows at a president distance. We appropriately." It was not lost on any of his man, the failing strength of Sir Allathaue, as he uttroot those weeds, nor the trail of head dropping from the left flarik of his steed. But for "The lost" not head his men, either in hattle or in season of shotor, was

unthinkable.

Then Balor, with his keen eye, sighted the small but nearly tacked away within a small stand of fat, bushy pines

Against the black knight had proven instruction.

Now squrro Pike sat with his back to the room, staring
out into the whiteness of the storms. From the smell of the
heavy air, he expected they would be forced to stay put for at
least another day, and then what?

Suddonly the room hegan to shimmer and fade out of

focus. Pike's first reaction was fear, then a second set of monories unged forward and he realized what was happened. He reached wide when happened he reached with the major of his neck to teach something that was not them. On hands and knees, Pike crept toward his master. Almost before he true hed sharboar's endoider the lessons.

On hands and knees, Pike crept toward his master.

Almost hefore he touched Alathane's shoulder, the knight's eyes flew open. The clark-blue eyes that stated at Pike with such fierce clarity temporarily stopped him, but the pulse in his neck could not be denaed.

"Jisob—th, sire, I must take my Jeave. I must return."

"Affirst Alathane only stared; then in a dry vene he said,
"Of course, my friend D one werey. It won't be long now.
The overlays of the horsemen slotted in perfectly. We are finally ready to proceed."

Then, firmly grahbing the arm of his manservant, Alathane added, Try to keep the old host from detenorating though soon it will say good-bye to that prison of flish focuses.

The room field rapidly and Squire Pike's last memory was of husching over his master, nedding at his words while booking out the window at the ever-increasing arms, findings.

nsues, braift oversly and deeply while containing to a hundred.

As the thir layer of reveals cooled from his body, "Pike counted. Between stray and seventy, like clockwork, he fail to hale in the front stetting. A clepty, he slowly resched to the nape of his neck and popped the hos-ectic out his neural dock. Opening one sye, he took a peole af the times—clader for free hours and forly minutes. He fall hadder made the last Pike por to his feet and the property of the country of the property of the propert

hathroom. He hardly glanced at the emeasted figure lying on the other recliner, but he did take the time to some the myetal of explaintanted file-cycle menters. It didn't take a medical miss to see that time was running out for his boss. From the bathroom, Pike looked hack into the main room

to see that times were raintening out for his boost.

From the bathroom, Pike looked back into the maint room
through the tined mirror and sighed. "Well, Jakob," he said,
"within a day at most, this will all he over...one way
another."

Pike walked past Jakob and stooped before the pickure.

window that aparased the south well of the combination of fiftis/heatings, Rather than take in the pursuement was of the cap 125 floors believe, he holidad up to see if he could go to the cap 125 floors believe, he holidad up to see if he could go to the cap 125 floors believe, he holidad up to see if he could go to the cap 125 floors believe to the cap 125 floors believe to the goods were emilting upon the black calcid of Garlings, not only also see that the cap 125 floors believe to the cap 125 floors believe

duty mist. Making a way fate, he looked upward once more to the heasies of the night sky before he turned away from the window. Barnly raising his voice, Pito and a single word, and his powerful computer-count system spenge to he in a dataful-counting innor, it said, "Yee, Mister Piko," to acknowledge the command.

acknowledge the command.

"Find Mr. Willis, and send him to me at once."

Moments later, a stick of a man in a gray suit quietly

Moments later, a stack of a man in a gray suit quotity easem the softly-is office. Breathing deeply, he regarded the top of Sylvano Pike's head, "Lovely night, sir; glad to havyou back."

Pike momentarily regarded Willis, reflection, then

allowed his eyes to warder past the floor-to-ceiling studows.

"Yes, from here at looks very pleasant. What's it like down
below?"

Willis shrugped slightly and raised his cychrows. "Not

within stragged slightly and mased his eyebrows. Not quite as pleasest, but nothing out of the ordinary. Knowing how Pike disliked small talk, Wallis got to the point. "I am sure you will be pleased on bare that I elw more of those pakly trial gauge have been placed into detention...and also, the Walth Goe project appears to be concluding as expected." "The Matters Minimismo," inserted nice. "The more trials and the project appears to be considered as a property of "The Matters Minimismo," inserted nice. "The more trials and the project appears to be considered as a property of the project appears to be concluding as expected."

as based settlements, secrete place. The metal change of the place of

"Yes, set, and through their black-market contacts, more of the understables are keeping the new enhancers for personal use. What a homenta of information for the Penco Kooper."
With heavily contained simplesses, Willis picked an invisible strand of line from his lapsl. "If I may add, as, the acrosy of those soil registrous fools at WebbCoop getting themselves into heavile waster by using an obviously stellar enhancer. Serves thim

Excellent, Mr. Willis. So if there is nothing too proxing I would like to proceed wife."

Fixuse me, are, but before we continue, there is the mainer of the governor's request for additional Rifeckyo. He

matter of the governor's request for additional Rikokyo. He says he is very pleased with how smoothly the penal colones are running now that the wardens have a deeper insight info-." Pike semirked and looked at Willis. "Let him dangle. Remmed him that we are still waiting for a favorable ruling on the use of our Serioe-2 Claim."

Withe moded and smiled at Price. "Very good, sir." Sylvano Pike shrugged. "Business is business, but enough of that. Tomestrow morning we being in our subject: De Wine. I hope you have everything in order."

Again the neighly accuse for a smile. "Yes, sir.

Everything west smoothly. We just wanted to cross-reference her last bu-images with the originals. As expected, she is the perfect candidate. Other than her super-sensitive occupital lobe, the overlay should be perfect."

Now it was Pike's turn to smile. 'So...it's her occipital lohe, as it? In other words—she has great eyesight and caught you again, Mr Willis, or is it. Mr. Rawlings?' Willis smiffed, and fearming deep crescoal insury, said.

"If there is nothing also, art, I would like to got a few hours sleep if I am to pick up Chinon De Wite as scheduled." Still chuckling, Pike said, "By all means, Mr. Willis, by all means."

Loars felt, rather than sow, the steady strobes of light playing across her darkened visor. She lay still and listened to the increasing tone of the door chimes. She wouldn't be able to fearn sleep much longer. Thank God she had massed out while wearing her Mount. Whoever took the trouble to override her security screen like this must want her protty badly. The enhancer! That was all it could be. Silently cursing herself for bringing it home. Laura tried to shake herself free from last night's drug-induced slumber. So much for waking up alort and rested. Think! Where did you leave the fucking thing? If that was a GenTupp Marshall staring into her homeplace...finally, she remembered the stolen bio was safely stored in her bar.

The tone of her door chime was getting aggravating, making her head feel like it was in a kettle deam. She took a doep breath, sat up, and ripped off her HeadMount. Prepared to feign surprise at the intrusion-but not having to fake groggmess-Laira got to her feet, letting the sheet-nod fall to the floor. She stared in amazement at the larger-than-life face that scowled at her from the door-screen. Lake he had been struck, has jaw dropped and his eyebrows shot up Laira stood there puzzled for a moment, then let out a

shrick and dove for the sheet-pad. Still hung-over and overwhelmed by the visage of one of the world's most powerful men forming into her home. Lasra had forpotten that, other than the derres still clinging to her ear, she was bure-Sylvano Pike quickly regains his composite and said,

'Laira De Witte, good morning. As you probably know, my name as Sylvano Pilos. I would appreciate your presence at the main office of GenTapp Construct. I have urgent business with you. I have taken the liberty and arranged transportation. The car is outside wasting for you now." Smiling thinly, he added, "And by the way please don't for ent your-excuse me-our enhancer." Twenty minutes later. Lairs maked out of her graffitisplattered front doors, ignoring the early-morning crowd of

rubber-neckers. A tall, thin man, all dark glasses and gray seit, stood waiting in front of an old-fashioned, black himousine. oblivious to the growing crowd. "Citizen De Witte, allow me," the man said and opened the rear door After Larga sat down, he surprised her by getting in and sitting across from her. As he closed the door, the car began to move. Not bothering with introductions, he offered Lairs.

coffee or orange juice. "Are they real?" she blurted. "Why yes, cifizen, quite authentic."

"Good. I'll take both." Might as well so down in style. she thought As she sipped and savored the fresh page, Laws heard a faint buzz. She looked quickly to her escort and noticed a tury. yet unmistakable, pink glow coming from his left lens. 'Citizen. I have been instructed to varify that you have

brought the image enhances "Y'am." Lairs pointed at her bar. Her excert rusted his evelcows and neered over the top

of his glasses. "Thank you Mr. Pake would also like to know if you are wearing or carrying any drugs," "No," Larra said queetly. Tipping the glass, she finished the last of her spice. Placme the empty place on the built-in the bet of her suice. Placing the empty glass on the built-in tray beside her, Laira looked through the tinted glass. At the rate the District was flying by, she thought they must have cleared

the military lane for them.

"Excuse me, citizen, if you would tell me how you like your coffee Lagra was put famshing her second cup of coffee when the car pulled up to the front doors of the GenTapp Tower. Her travel companion opened the door and excerted her through the first of two sets of security doors. As he wanted

her through the inner doors. Larra felt a timpling in her neck socket. Body-scanners' When the large tinted-glass doors shut behind them, Laira's senses were overwhelmed. The spacious lobby was crystal clear-somehow not subject to the usual pervasive hint of haze that seemed to hope everywhere also in the city. But it was the clean taste when she inhaled that startled her. Pond are! And the real thing too! Street hawks sold it at two credits for ninety seconds: though most of the time the shit they sold was provided hospital seconds mixed with small amounts of

deetal fro-sus. Discretion cast aside. Laws inhaled deeply and nously, her postrils flarms Her escort smaled blandly. Using the tone of a bored tour-guide, he sead, "you may find yourself becoming dizzy if you breathe too much of that at once." Looking down his nose at her, he continued in his condescending way. "Besides, most of the building has a steady stream of it, so just relax and enew

it while you are here. The elevator doors, detecting their presence, opened automatically. Lairs turned around emokly and took a good look at the beautiful black-and-gray-marble lobby they had passed through all too quickly. She guessed at two thousand feet of unoccurred space, including that taken up by what appeared to be real plants. While wasting for their floor, Larra looked to her escort

"Do you have a name?" "Certainly," he replied without the slightest hint of SSECURES

Lairs hung her head and laughed, but before she could say anything more, the elevator door abruptly slid open. The isophter died in her throat when she saw Sylvano Pike standing in front of her, hands on his hops, eyes blazare. Laira's eyes locked onto Pike's and, instantly, she was cought up in the although he looked older and shorter than on the NewScans, he still looked every bit as powerful. Without turning down the power in his eyes, he introduced himself and reached for her hand. Lasta was not in the loast surprised at the power she felt emseating from his handshake. Without letting go of her, Pike gently guided har to one

of four large, gray leather sofus. Glancing over his shoulder, he said. "That will be all, Willis. Thank you Out of the corner of her eye, Larra caught Willis giving Pike a thumbs up sign and a small wave. A small bell started to go off in Laga's head: there was something familiar about that wave. All thoughts of Willis evaporated as the impact of her surroundings overwhelmed her

Surrounded by the over-stuffed sofas was the largest block of class Lagra had over seen. Perfectly buffed and polished on the outside, the made, just below the surface, was an explosion of feorer multi-colored bubbles and star bursts. As Pake carcled one of the sofas and sat beside her, Latra surveyed the zoom. There were paintings, probably originals, on three walls. A floor-to-ceiling wandow took the place of the fourth wall. Catching a reflection from the table, Laira looked un. Her brow furnowed as she tried to place the magnificent work of art that adorned the large, domed ceiling.

"Brown my, Mr. Do Witte, or would you profee Lam?" I proving the question, Lam saled one of he row. "Inn't that out of some bankrupt Buropean city-a church, or something like that? I've seen that protors in a meanth file, or a shartery sim, 'she said, still crauming her neck upward. "I'st real?"

Pike glanced at the crailing, thus back to Lam. "Well,

yes, the mural is quite authentic. Originally, it was part of a famous Roman chapel—now as I was saying, the reason I so urgently—"
"Excuse me," Laira said. "I can't emember ever having

Facuse me, "Lura said. "Load's memember ever howing real coffice in my life, or genume coange juine. I filmsh leand to use our historom." For a moment, Pike gave Laira a doleful look; then he said, "Down the half—your first right." Her mind arcing, Laira walled brinkly down the wide hallway. After all that good coffice, the day have to visat the ladies room, but that wasn't the only reasons the needed a

moments to bertrell. No way was she going to get her ass shalled across town to the Circ Tapp Towns, printing pland with fresh pute and coffise all the way, because of a stolen implies. No, someting was ongoing others. And lies look that Prins great her bend to look that Prins great her bend to be the prins great her bend to be the printing to her bend to be the printing to her bend to be the printing to the pr

maximize the opportunity. No matter what the cost.

While I can to solv fine to a regard price meritical extend, tapping the act of his nose with a revit, assument fingure. She would be perfect. At first he had doubted Derry's choice. Wiskly he had kept those doubts to himself, for when Lauries that came in, she had secred the implicate possible on all the profile arthrition tents. Even after reaching a degree of morems which the company's waiting degreement, har accome assumed which the company's waiting degreement, har accome assumed which the company's waiting degreement, har accome assumed to the contract of th

agostic for more. But it was the brain patients—they had harn so precise that Pike thought the computer had made an error. But no, Derry had heen right again. Pike smiled wryly to himself; one thing the computer couldn't have predicted was bow this scraffy EastSale brillal punk affected him. He remembered how she looked this morning—alloring, almost primal in her sakedness—tad then by

meeting—alluring, almost primal in her nakeduses—and then by the elevator—the intensity of her look, the magnetism— Pitc's thoughts were interrupted by the sound of Lama's heels elicking down the hall. He smilled as he cought sight of her shapely legs coming seward him.

"Ab, Luis..." soding. What do you want from mo?" Locking out the window, the sided, "I appreciate the view, but Locking out the window, the sided, "I appreciate the view, but Locking out the window, the sided, "I appreciate the view, but Locking the "Re's sent from the following the side of the officasive, as illustrated by her out digrang in the hist fastship sightening the side of the

will be over. Your account would he so full of tax-free credits that I couldn't see you apending the annual interest..phps,"— Piles recalled her self-esteen scores on the fore chartercould be the head of the daytime drama-sag's...if you want the position."

Lama's mouth opened and stayed that way. She looked at Piter and decaded she should at thom.

Are you ready to hear what you must do? "Pite looked upon a raddenly ashen Lama. A few moments went by, and still Laiss this not move, did not look up. Possibly there was something the computer had missed, after want 'the nouthout."

Lists looked up doorly, and Pike's breath cusplit. A look, Just one look and Pike as whe hunger, the naked predately look of a whole datted destilled into the eyes of conyoung fastney water. Their eyes look, and now it was Pike's tarm is look oway—they both realized there was nothing also "So than, Pile register," and Pike ority. We have a crass situation here. Forming behind him to the closed door, Piles contained. "In that room our book, Jackob Deny,

a crisis situation here. "Pointing behind him to the closed done, Pilte contained." In that room is our book, Jakob Derry, He has been deing stone fautary research with a new enhancercent that to only signify more advanced than the one you have been using."

For once is in ber life, Larar, was silient.

"A work ago, he went into an SLF program, and...well,

he harm't come book."

Lars quickly found her tongue. "A work! He's been down a whole fuching work! Are you people crary? Get her people with the people of the people of

remained in a partial come; last night they began to decay again. We must get him out of there...soon." Lama closed her eyes for a moment. She had heard of simheads straige under for fishes hours straight, only to come hack totally amoun. Although SLF was a popular diversion, at was still a new form of except, not without it it dangers and was still a new form of except, not without it it dangers and prompting the straight of the straight of the straight of the possibly help year?"

"Will as Il membroad, we were usurg a pow mipsor. It

is very indical." Pike's eyes travelled to Laira's bag on the sade of the soft. "We can now make the fantasires so intense, so real, that no one ever worsts to leave." Each strongly back to the property. Lairs thought back to lost raght, when her his-ord? was in proces, "So? That's bosn our good all along, but there are safety features. I still don't good."

safety features. I still don't gen-"
"Please, there is something else-a breakthrough of sortsthe capitality for shared fantaies, multi-user suns, something
like the multi-tasking capitalities of last century computing."

Lian's vens welferned. Multi-user fantaises were the
dozum of every writer, just the concept was still within the
name of science-factors writers. "Realty! Does it work? Can.

I-"
Pike looked straight into Laira's eyes and said, "Young lady...we want-no, we need-you to go into Derry's fantasy and get him out of there."

and get him out of there.

"I can't believe at. Why me? Where is the genius who invested this new implant? Get him to go in there.

File frowned. "It is not that simple. First of all, the

inventor is Iskoh Derry; no one else was in on st. Well, that is not quite true; some personnel were given dated copies of the new enhancers as we made them. We wanted to see if there were any side-offects."
"You fuckers! so you have been experimenting on us-

"You fuckers! to you have been experimenting on mawithout our consist of knowledge. What a boand of brainghet." Spars me the hast-inner. The deed has been done and the fact remains: we made an error and need to cover at up, We will pay well to correct the strauton. You are probably dulking there can 't be much life of Derry' arma, well, we will not be the property of the property of the concone-vate to keep him going until we can unbe for ground transferation of corrects above.

"Okay...\" m not singed. I know I can't refines, but how of I know you will ever let me walk out of here. If this is a cover up, you could been me out with the rait of the garbage. If so not like a upone would miss me out with the rait of the garbage. Plea smilled. "Good print. But I sen a man of my would live a lower that I will mave jet may thing happen to you. I wouldn't not want any harm to come to that lovely body and pretty face of yours. But I slit is chear. Unit the commit and call a waren you.

like, it if them where you are sed even what you are up to."
"What? So you can round them up later and still them as
well?"
Ne stretched out his sems and spoke softly. "Later, this
is an emergency. What can I do? How can I make you believe
mô? There comes a time when people have to take a chance on
other people. Take you with mo, and me with you.

Latra walked to the Compuleron and reached for the access pod. She passed and stared at Pike. "So you will let me cill any or all of my friends?"

Looking very misgred, Pike just nodded.

Litra smiled a hard smile and harmed to Pike. "Good, then I word-haven" to that my friends anyway. So we going to

star around her all day? Let's get to it. What kind of sim is he in? Hope it in I a porn fantasy—not that they hother me, just bore me sersoldes.

Pike hlinked twice and gave her an only smale. Everything has been worked out. We just need the intrader-

"Everything has been weeked our. We just need me instanceer, the overlay-to-find Jaiob and get him the hell out of there." Pike got to his feet. "String your hag, and we'll move to the other room." He turned and opened the double doors behind him. Waiting for Lairs, he half bowed and extended and outstretched arm, uthering her in. When Laine entered, she was taken by the sheer opinions

of the room. Soft Pensian carpeting covered much but not all of the low-gleaning fine purposed flow. Two of the walls were mahogung covered and deeply lastered. For a moment, the biver size and richness of the room, along with the hanks of sophisticated computers on the far wall, held Lain's page, then the saw the small black-clad figure lying on one of the twin

While Pite busied limself decking various menines, Lira bodeal at the form of Mr. Jakob prey. Although one of the most powerful men on the plant, he certainly dash is do it with all the threat and pump percising from that areas, madin with all the present and pump percising from the areas, madin that the eclasive inventoelectronics-genius bud arever allowed his belongaphs to be taken. The only pictures available of Deny were all taken well before Lain had been been. Gently turning his hand, the reposed the back of his cack. The bevenil protending from his dack certainly looked to the protecting from his dack certainly looked Pite motioned for Lain to take the other reclame, See opened her bug and took out her enhancer. Without another word, the peaks her kin parts had pepped it through place. Place quadry walked to her risk, trailing a glowing piece of failurest which he spiked with apparent fall limit lears's remail dock.

"All right now, your characterization will be this of your page overing Lord Alshkins, file Loon. The setting's in alternate, ancient England. The overlay will he of you having hou, a way refereiving interpolation messages from the King to

Lara grimaced. "Sword and Sorcery? Yechh' is this a straight forward modered longht sage, repicto with damsels in distress and peetry castles on the horizon? Somehow! expected more..."
Pike stopped fidding with the glowing wires and looked down with supprise at Laws. "Oh, I think you will find the

Whatenshis wars fasteny querte fescinating. It is for that exceeded that I can booking up a third connection. You will be our computer. I do not introduce the sector—and of the sector—and the sector of the secto

Lazar was still fulling when, the next thing she realized the was suring the set, causes wood of her hemo-pure scarf that the had to keep going. With our contents the set had to keep going. With our ovidence that the what had been for set of the real property of the mean that the had to keep going. With our ovidence that the whenhaling the right direction, the continued on part institut since an understand that so the right september of the property of the set of the s

mages have been softed in risture.

Now in the middle of the storm, Laira talked to her steed
genile careaus and the hist of the sign of the storm of
genile careaus and the hist of the sign of the sign of
genile careaus and the hist of the sign of the sign of
the sign of the sign of the sign of the sign of
of fit pines. Could that be where her loof lay in history?

Universe ber horize one ward. Laira somroached what

Egging her horse conward, Laura approached who approached by heap approached by heap approach by the proposal to he a small, rough aches. Ye is wee, and there has bittered would take case of any would be partition. Sea Calledon and the contract of the dark Englis, the waved the most on the sincerary of the dark Englis, the waved the contract of the dark Englis, the waved the contract of the work of the dark Englis, the waved the contract of the work of the contract of the work of the contract of the world recover a stiff arow the contract of the world recover a stiff arow to a signal on wholeons from those badder cough the heat of a signal of wholeons from those badders and the contract of the world recover a stiff arow.

"More wars, Jakob—er, Jay?" Pike said as he continues to watch the wintry scene on the flatterson.
"Um, pleases—excellent, even using this somewhat untrained palette. Enquisitely full-bodied teste, with not the

slightest hint of anything naughty or presumptuous."
First falling the glass next to his, then his own, Pike
looked closely at what appeared to be Laira De Witte.
Show—eight at the ead, she knew something wasn't right."

### Harsh Mistress SEA

The pretty face smiled knowingly at Pike. "Don't worry about that, Sylvano. Let's drink a toast-but remember," she said with iron in her voice, "Don't get any ideas; even in a woman's body. I'm still the boss around here. Looking down at her new body. Jay let her free hand run down from her multi-pierced right car to her neck and further to her full breasts. "Mmd you, possibly if you got me very

drunk, we could see. Sir-excuse me, Jay-what should I 46 with..." That?" asked jay pointing at the unmoving black form still curled up on the recliner. She took another deep drink of wine before replying. "Have Willis unplug it and burn it with

the rest of the garbage." "Very good." Pike looked at the screen and watched the young page being warmly received by the battle-weary Lord Alathane, "And her?" he asked,

Jay raised a new stender evolves and looked to the mant screen. 'Keep her in the mainframe with the rest of them. It is not such a bad life: clean sir-and she did mention she liked the air-good food, lots of open space, and judging from the looks she is cetting from that handsome Lord, possibly some much needed company. Yes by all musins been her. When we need someone to intrude into someone else's mind, she will be more than happy to assist us, as are all the others Looking into her empty glass, she said, "Now let's open

some more wine...lots of wine. Laira first new thought was almost childlike, but blindingly fast, and then over almost before it impacted upon her enhanced brain. What was it? Fear-out-h black fear-of falline? No! She wasn't falling, she was travelling from one bright, shimmering easis of knowledge to another travelling fast, faster than any human had ever travelled in the past. One part of the entity that had been Laira almost made it home-a ruman homing instinct, she thought-back into EastSkin before realizing that she didn't need or want to be there, and then faster than a blank of an eve she was heading back into the fortress of GenTapp. But wait, these mysterious conduits of travel became less foreign. The entity that is/was Laira

experienced an awareness that her access routes were in scalibly data transmission lines, telephone lines, dedicated and highspeed modern lines Laira made a quick detour toward, then into, the mainframe of the PeaceKeepers. A quick swipe and decades of files and dossiers were corrupted, destroyed beyond sny hope of salvage, but not before the entity absorbed all the data--the secrets and hidden knowledge of the most powerful law enforcement arency on the planet. Leaving behind her

pandemonium, destruction and confusion, Laira merely flicked her over-expending consciousness and instantly obliterated say tracks or hint of intrusion. Back to her destination-the fortress of GenTapp, where a stunned nike and shocked Jakob Deery, masqueraling in Laira's human body, were slowly becoming aware that the digitized face winking at them from their computers was the

real, the enhanced, Laira De Witte. The entity that was Laira, thinking own factor than she could travel, looked out and up from her transmission lines, saw and felt the lure of cyberspace. But a moment...just a moment, thought Laira. First there was some unfinished Experimenting for a nano-second gave the Laira entity the sure knowledge that she had enough power surging in the man-made cable to be able to fiv off into literally a million different directions at once...simultaneously be in thousands of data banks at once. Distance became a discarded concent. Suddenly, but certainly not with any alarm, Laira focused on the once mighty data banks of the GenTapp mainframe. Somewhere from within the data bank an alarm was being tripped. Lairs allowed it to function for a while, crawline inside its releating current, savyoring the raw and student sound, allowing it to massage her ever changing mind

became bored with the diversion and silenced the slarm. What had been Lairs shifted years, floated from data bank to data bank, exploring hidden rooms, soaking up incredible pools of knowledge. Her intrusion had been detected by the once-great GenTapp security wizards, but their power ended where Lairs's began

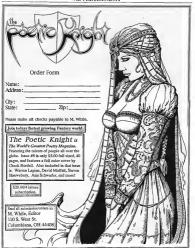
Lagra's deep, disembodied laughter echoed and neochsted off the stenie pillars of their once imprognable wall of security, their ice showing have cracks and holes. Soon the entity held the entire data-pak of what was the heart and soul of Gen Tann Construct. Refore heading out into the outer marchiof cyberspace, the entity turned and spoke-food for thought for a bewildered Jakob Derry. "I'll be waiting for you old bustard...the first time you jack in, I'm coming back to take what's mine- and everything that's yours."

Jay sat forward, looked at Pike, then back at the screen. What makes you think I'd be so foolish? What make you think you'll got away with thick he lights winked out as the terminal flashed a red alert. It displayed a number of system failures: lights, elevators, atmospheric control, sucurity doors, food processors.

lay stabbed away at the keys, refusing to believe that Lairs had complete control, that he was locked in, dependent on her for food, water, even air. When he finally gave up and sat back in defeat. Laira's face separed on the terminal and



#### ADVERTISEMENT





## THE PRIZE

D. Lopes Heald Illustrations ©1993 by G. Myles Johnson

Stalls landed hard, blasted that, view plate shattered, theoreompeased, cars shocked dear. Trying to sersoum, he large strained unto statisticing unclossesses. He floopped and by self. Residual to the statistic model through the breaks in his armost. Traciple distinguishment of the companies of the statistic model of his retaines—and trend to mover. Pain exploded up his think, commod the holder of the back and dot through this spins file.

He screamed.

'No.' A hand pinned his fistiling arm. 'Quiet. Gotta he quest Cap.' Desperation resighence the whappered command.

An armored palm side over his mustr. A hodylande pressed his side. But the pain didn't stop, washed up his leg-warmed his groin and set his entrails wething. A whiteper escaped.

Fingers persood harder. A plated chest bladder pumped.

against his. In the distance, thin piging councid, and mreasoned, instinctual four froze his heart. The call fided Pump pump pump. The other hide breathed. Then— "They're past." The hole situaged. The hand lifted from the moch.

"Who!" His whipper escaped thin and trumulous. "Runchoxs."

Schoxs. He'd meant, who are you. But the answer closed his mind. Schoxs at wounded alive. If this man bidds't quieted him-His leg stabhed pain. He twisted, monaing. "All right, Cap. All right." Weight lifted from his amound doradker. "I'll get some damper."

On yes, Marba be could drink them.

"Let me m." Hands tagged at his handslesse. He keyed the should be marked be marked by the hands of the hands

through his broken view plate, practiced his burns, lifted muser, from his hair and whaspered over his size. So seared, he thought. Even with the armor hetween them, he senied the other's heart pounding. Who the heal is still he stall deduct recognize the voice. Where was everyholy? Platic threatened, but the drugs damped in. His hough.—but started as the hard lifted from his mouth. Still the damper held. Nothing hurt. His mind sharpened and

oleared.

"Who?" he asked the shadow hunched above.

"Factore."
Stacks. Why Fairner? The nick couldn't be trusted with
hazare duty.
"Where're the others?" He shivered. They'd been

hanched together. Whatever hat him, hit them all.

"Dead."

Dead. He swallowed hard and closed has eyes, which made httle difference to what he saw. It figured Fairner'd annies. But Frience fed.

survive. But Faimer Rod.

"Can you see, Kad?"

"Yosh. Doyle fell on me—sook most of the blast." Bug
Doyle. "I can't get him off me." Farmer's voice scaled upward,
and Stalks insure the jud wasn't himg this time.

"If you get froe can you walk?" He kept his own voice low and hady.
"Yesh." He could sense Farner fighting for control.
"What you see!"
What you see!"
A had question, make or hreak. Fairner hesitated a

A fact question, make of nreak. Farmer nestated a breath, but kept it together. "The fighting's moved on. Isn't much hopposing."
"We lost, then?"

"Maybe. But the Schoxs act womed for wanters."
"Good."
"There's smoke toward Bing-toc. What's the naxt

names ruly."

Now State benstaid. If he told Farmer would the hid rep out and levels him to die? Six menths tage Cammand forced the bested on him, and over time he locked in be Farmer's person, and over the respective of the state of the representation of the respective of the resp

about st, Sarge just said, he's kind to his freends. But which freenful? Damn you, Sarge—can't he dead. And Phil? Stalts shuddened. He and the locus'd houn a team for a decade. Can't be dead? Den't leave me alone with Fatters. "Pemore hod. He clang to that thought.
"Can't The mick waited for an answer.

"Rodeye," he said. "Rodeye's the nearest raily station."
If there was a raily,
Farmer's breath hissed loud in his car. The tuber know
how to figure the odds too.

"Where you hast?"
"Brusses. I'm All right." But Fairner always Incd"Got to get Doyle off my foot."
He watched Fairner's eithouette struggle with a darker
blob. Having worked this game for twenty years—twenty?—be

knew focusing now would be a mistake.

"B-b-hithur hell—" Farmer's curse broke on a sob.

Stalts squeezed has sysec closed. But he couldn't escape the
smell—blood, intestinal bacteria—all of it. The kid flopped at
his side, curled up kness to chest and shivered so hard their
armor tupped together in a chicky song.

"Kuff"
Farmer incouped. Stalts let him be, husbanding his
own strength. The Schotts might come foreigning—And it
would get dann cold out here after dark with his arisk
sentiting with his leg.

"Kid?"
'The kid paged and gulped are.
Static gritted his tector, figuring they were finished.
But Fairner struggled up, breath rasping loud against the
static his distance surrounding them, strangled a moss,
struggled without surrounding them, strangled a moss,

But Fairner strugglod up, breath rasping food against the alteghter field silence surrounding them, strangled a moun, controlled has stomach and pushed onto his feet. "I can see Corky." The kild sucked a long heath and hold it. "I can get the medpak. Its just a few moters." It

on a mastal pipe, shethed the breath from him.
Gods, they got him. But there should be more
piping. The Schoozs were moving wary. And, he'd hate the
fight if they caught Fainner. The led must either be pone or
grounded too far away to warn him. He lay slack, fintening,
just listening.

A keream froze his gut. Don't let it be Fainner. The

scream faled. Dear, demon-demond, how could be wish someone slice doed rather than the 16x2? But Furners stood between him and his own death. Shuffling feetoteps considering grade and antiling—Schotz. The feetoteps to stopped-dragging and mutalling—Schotz. The feetoteps to stopped had tood to fight. Something plopped. Something slurged. Dear's move. Be All right, Lie still—See fine. His stomach swelled against his displeram, and he couldn't find cought organ. But before to meet a full Schot than a langery

He hold on, strappling to control his heusting, his stonach, his because, strapping not roundes a sound stronach and the strapping to the mode as design and the strapping failed to morets and grounder-then therefore the strapping failed to sounded, or the strapping failed to sounded, or the strapping failed to sounded, or copies and shattered armor. Statis's sign should. Chill are supported through the side 's check and crucks, growing cooler. A stray prif found the larent on his face. He showed.

Had Fairner been the mass coorse? He did the nick

described hefore the Schotts arrived? Or decaded his captum was filleted, and why face the remains? He wouldn't blame a man for that, not even Fainter. Something rustled—close, not the wind. His gut bunched, and his howel thesatmed.

Gap:

Breath exploded outward. His eyes flipped open, staring at a darkening sky and a horrid shadow figure.

"Damn'it, Kid."

Blinking, he steadord. His vision closered, Costot di gron, one arm of the little quilled with shrepped. Pairmer looked monstream. Stalts suchoid deep breath. He could not. "I got at: Faitness dropped as pack at his side and collapsed onto it." You need more damper before 1 do your legit. The led sounded surressonably calm. "I test a graze." He matched Faitner's tops. But

"Just a graze." He matched Fairner's tone. But opening his hide again, he wished with all his heart he dared gaze out. A needler brushed his arm.

"All right." He waited. The drift came just right. He hadn't realized how much he hust. "Tha-" The sight of Fairner spreading a pulf-oplint next his twisted leg took his breath again.

Here goes." The kid's jerky movements betrayed the calm in his varies. The kid's jerky movements betrayed the kid's arm.

Tamer vanked. He swallowed a scream and grabbed the kid's arm.

Then the splint puffed, and the agony spiraled down. He collapsed beneath Farmer's feesing.
"Closs your eyes, Cap."
They were. His broken view plate creaked open.

They were. His hocken view plate creaked open.

Chill must hissed over his face, sealing and seeding.

"Lock at me."

He obeyed, and before be could focus, liquid slopped into his eyes—superplus saline solution—blessed relief.

into his eyes—superplus saline solution—blested relief Binking, he rolled his had to keep the staff out of his nee. A cloth blotted the excess. Faimer's semend fingers fumbled a tab behind his cut—on MVB, multi-vinit-bor—to stop infection. "Got move, Cap." Faimer closed the remains of his view plate. "Now."
"What about you? Your sem?"

"Took care of it waring for the Schoos to leave." The
kid's breath pented against his ear. "Dunn. I thought they are
you."

"I thought—you." He errored the taber's shoulder.

Fairner shuddered. Armored arms slid around his chest and lifted. He'd foregotion how strong the list was—when the mak feel like exercing himself. In camp, Fairner stood up first for dictary duty and last for anything else. Like a twisted scoot, everything the list fid willingly had to do with food. Ought to have Carly check him.

No. Carly's dead. Carly's dead. He shook and

nave-carry check mm.

Should be shou

The bearted had mad, it's All right, be might have killed him. But the lance sounded true, as if an old amaspole, who really field know. The stakes geopped. Stalls key will fine against their shoulder. The Temer best it, went stiff, belimist hissing open, and collid away it to hat let the start hissing open, and collid away it to hat let demonst he is the command, the end of his command, but captains took care of their people, and the kid needed help. Supriming subveniety with his spitting lag, he reached a plant under Farmer's behind and little it out of the nuce. The his dead, and the lad knappered, that not two by the than should,

"Gotta move, Kid."
Fairner nodded, hauled himself up, logs quaking like
whipprass, and leaned on his firetube for a long breath. Stalls

didn't see how the man could early him, but Fairmer reached for the modpak too.

"Leave n." Fairmer let n go. "Leave the take."

"Against regs, Cap." Fairner's voice rose shrill,

hysteria threatening. "Whatever you want."

Additively you sould be about a time it was no time to upset that behavior. And may be he'd never grows the discount of the country of the co

properly, then steaffed. Stalle held on.

But overly way the kind humed another body, another
one of his relativest lay teen to shrude. Little I've staged out of
her view plate as beaustiful as even, energet the lashed rang body.
The sight cut a hole in him too deep to beal. Futner didn't
make a sound. He figured the kid water t looking asymen. Or
maybe it just didn't mean anything to the nick. Stalle cred
The kid hald't be.

Farriers welled, moving them from nighteness to nightmare, tredging off the rise. The last glimmer of light disappeared from the shrouded sky. Farmer kept walking, using enhancers and heat sensees. Solul's own glowed a hale around his shuttred vow plate. He hung a helpfon horden to he had's hake and began to doubt. He'd grayed for Fairmer to come hock and hand him out of this mess. But alone, the lot could anyon—the last of his toron. Why should he be litt them

"Better stash me."

"That's an order."
"That's an order."
"That's an order."
"Earne walked, only slowing as they came off the me and into the shadows of a guited building complex. They could hade as the runs, but so could Schoxx. "Put me down."
The hair walked. "Idok." Farmer tripped. One knoe buckled, and the had buded on it with a great. Stalts relied off, belong a creak from Pamer's friethed the set his seen singing. Dunn.

They'd passed a hundred spots where Farmer could have left host. Tuhers were shousy fitzed. "Farmer, you're insubordanah."
"And you're delirious." The kid's class bladder where designed him.

wheezed against him.

"You're stared. You're not doing any good. Find me
a place, got to raily and send rescue back."

"What if there un't a raily."

"Then we're back School folder." Plus on the leid. "As

Then we're both Schot; Indier. Pas on the lot. "As least you'll save yourdiff some pan in the meantime." "You're wrong." Fairner grabbed an arm, shd his shoulder hucerds it and hind Saids onto his feet. "Wale." He did--not of-balancing on the splint, gratting his tooth against the pan in his other leg. They repress was slow and hard on him. But Fairner's breathing steaded They saided upon his which his mand wandered.

The track should feave him. What was the going back to sayway? A captain that got his treep bloom the hell away wouldn't find willing recruits to form a new one. No Command. Maybe no legs. No Phil. No Iva. No anyone. What would be do?

He caught himself, realisted he'd giggled aloud. Worrying about what he would do, when there wasn't damn gonna be a would. You laughing, Buggs? The odds of them fiving were the little bookie's kind of bet. Stalts felt himself grin like an idnot. "More dament?" Faimer's voice shook.

"No." He squashed hysters. "You take a hit."
"No."
"How deep is that stuff hanging out of your arm?"

"Hope you got thack skim." Faurer laughed. It surprised Stalts all to hell. Well, good, he'd done something right by the kid. But then he slaped, taking them down.
"Get us." Fairner recovered with an effort. "You're

wearing me out."
Leave me."

No...
Arguing got them nowhere. He stood still while the harder wesstled him aboard and started off at a better pace than they'd been making. Teeth clenched, he rode it out. Fairner most we taken a shot to the hand to put this much effort into anything. It wous," like the nick, not at all. But the kid's brain would activate eventually.

anything, it wasn't like the nick, not at all. But the kid's brain would activate eventually.

He woke in darkness, on the ground. Finally. The kid found some sense. But something stirred—Fairner, not gene at all. Stalls key still, historing, trying to think. Were they hading? Dut he doer make a someth? He decided a Schot could

point is an South system, marring, crying to think, were they sideling? Did be done make a sound? He decided a Schoot could hear Fairmer's pointing half across the city, so there couldn't be any around.

"Kall" He groped for Fairner's helmet and found it open. The ninck had outrus his insternal oxygen production.

"S'alright." The inswer came weak and beauty.
"Damper?"
"Yosh-needlar in my bolt. My right."
Stalts found it by feel, activated it the same way.

"Is at set?"
"Yeah"
"Gonna open?"
"Can't open the skieves."

"Nhat's wrong with the other one?"
"Same thing. I just clipped the shrapnel ends off so I could carry you."
"Darm's Kad."

"Do it in my neck."
"You'll pass out."
"That's why I crawled in here."

Except for the ragged glow of his suscer lights, States couldn't see what here meant. He reached a hand above his head and encountered a coverd ceiling. When he rolled to straighten his leg, the floor sceped and settled, a pile of rubble. If the place dash't cave in on them, it was a good spot. Renechosts were classicophobic. He na his finews down Farmer's awasty awe, found

the hollow of the kin's throat and pressed the needler to it. The tuber's breathing alowed, smaclest relating. Stalls slid his finges to Fainner's puble. It here like a force storen. Deam Cocking has bried, he finally found a small proce of view plate through which he made out the lad's face. The man's heat color wasn't good. He shifted. Fairner startled, sattling him. "Cap?"

"Relax. Your hear's heating."
Farmer's broath hissed out. Stalts felt for fever. The hid's face turned into his hand—warm. Too warm? "Cap—



hungry." Hungry? What was happening with the kid?
"I'll get it." He tracked for the regulation food pocket on the kid's left bandoher. "Other side."

"You got extras?" He heatsted. Yeah." The kid's voice faded. "This one?" He tapped the corresponding pocket on

the right bandolier He dag out two packets, angling his head and closing one eve to focus through his patch of intact view plate. The

extras were illegal slosh, subspecies mix that would fill a man if he could stomach it. He cocked his head further "Bad steff, Kid. You'll bucket"

"I'm used to it. Please. I'm starving." Fairner's voice shook. Stalts sighed. Damn, it was

most of the day since they'd eaten, and Fremer'd worked like a o-make "I got regular-- "

"No." The kid's voice broke. "Regular won't keep me going And finally-Stalts understood. Funny smelling

breath, always scrounging after food, inhuman strength, accelerated pulse.— The kid was hiding, playing an obscene game. "You're a blossed damn breed, aren't you, Fairner?"

"Yeah." He started to curse. But the kid shuddered so hard it solted right through him, and he remembered this was his troop, the nick's life his responsibility. And he owed the brood

his own. Damn. He rolled onto his back and stared at the fritzing halo of his sensors. \*Cap, please

His hand still gripped the ration packets. He opened one and held it out to the kid "Can't raise my arms anymore." Lords, hand-freding a breed. No wonder they forced

the kild on him. Give it so Stalts, he's son old to votice. He slit a corner, surjusted through his hit of usable view plate and hold the sutions packet to Fairmer's lips. The kid sucked. "More

He opened the second packet. The first held enough to make a Homo sapsens s. suck already. So Fairner was definitely Homo s, something-or-other else. "Army's a piss poor place to hade." "No." Fairner swallowed. "Its a good place to hide.

Just not damn safe." Bitter amusement tinged the breed's voice, and Stalts relaxed a little. "How do you got enough of the right food?"

"Don't. I samble for field rations and save them for manouvers. In camp. I scrouper. "I noticed. Did you steal my Holinmas pudding?" He'd wanted to kill for that theft, still had an area to strangle Fairmer.

"No." Fairner rolled his head away from the rations packet. "But I probably ate st." So who stole it? "Maybe liva." Fairmer's voice shook. Stalts exploded

tracide. "She wouldn't." His fists balled. The nick had no right. "She would. You were rettine pudey-soft. She'd do

anything for your own good. But she probably ddin't. More him Trixis and Trixis. They'd take anything."

"You're lying " His throat tightened another notch. The part about Iva was true, but not the tuans. "I'd know if I had throws "

'We were all used to it. No one complained If you accided something, it was safe. If you didn't, and they did, they borrowed it. They'd bring it back when they finished with it or leave something else. They're- " Fairner bestated, vosce breaking. "-they were Normans, but adopted Rhsi culture." Stalts badn't known the last. Farmer sighed. "They didn't

take that much " Stalts have over the broad strenged, mind wandering to better times. Dumr

"Someone left me a cake later," he said. "Thorn." It burt-hurt bad that this freak know anything about his own people that he didn't. Dame

Fairner choked. He erabbed the kid's collar speed and pushed it against fevered lips. Sucking, Farmer choked again, but finally settled with a mean That damper should be working better."

"Doing as good as ever." Damn. "What see you?" "Half s.z., a httln Riol, a little Usb-shangie," Two subspecies, the last barely sageons however

pretty the things were. Common sense said that a person's non-norm physical requirements should be known by the commanding officer. But regulation, this one time, favored the broods. If they could pass, nothing said they had to reveal their genetics to anyone, not even the trees medic. Some becode would rather die of mediagnosis than take a chance on their fellow soldiers finding them out.

'Did Curly know? "Just about everybody knew or guessed." Stalts felt the rubble running out from under him He'd thought he know his troop. Down them, Damn them for

dying on him. "Why didn't anyone tell me?" "Maybe the way you treated me, they figured you

knew \* He treat the kid that bad? You bad women flocking from every troop in regiment. Ded they all know?"

'No." Farmer's voice dropped. "I needed their presents, but it wasn't right to take advantage." So you let your friends sloop with them?" Fairner didn't answer. Stalts slammed a fist against

rubble. Faimer sobbed. Damn'it. Stalts couldn't move. It didn't matter that the man burt, didn't matter be'd been a fool to forget Iva and Doyle, Curly and the twins and all the others were Fairner's troop too. He couldn't move, just sat while the kid cried, lost in bad

Eventually Farmer fell asleen, at least he shut up. Stalts wrangled around until be faced the dim, distant circle of place that marked their corese from this hell pit. He shouldn't have shook the kid up, was sorry he knew about the kid, was Shouldn't have been, the triple scummans abomination. Oh damn, be was sorry everyone was dead

He drew bis Tri-S-10, resting it on a fallen construction block. Those somies couldn't be helped, but be owned the kild emough to watch over his sleep.

He shipped strake

He reached for Farmer, but the kid was already moving. Invered arms pinned to his ribplates. Fairner wriggled near. A call echoed through the building rubble. A low burn vibrated the sir. Stalts cocked his head. The kid stared back at

him. Figure grabbed the firetube, his movements descente and awkward, his breathing short. Stalts clonobed the kid's shoulder, stopping-Rusmmmm

The blast slammed them flat. Rubble rained on their heads. Stalts wrapped his arms about his weakened helm and prayed Baammon A second solt rained more parbage Baammum. Damn'st. The shockwave passed. The big tine-

run whated as at recharged. The School had a firing pad outside. He slapped Fairner's rump, and they scrabbled forward, the noise of their progress masked by the gun's growl. Fairmer rose into a crouch, his big tube tucked under one arm, dragging the end of st Stalts counted. Twenty seconds. The eur's where built to a shrick. Ten

Farmer hat the ground in front bem, armored body shoulding his from the forward shockways. He wondered as the gan pound-pound-pounded again, if Farmer's positioning was intentional protection. Thirty seconds. They started crawline while the run's white spiraled irround aroun.

Twenty, Ten They broke into open space next the outer wall of the building. Light flared. The gun blow. A warm squirt streamed down Stalts's sanitary line, and Fairner's body bounced off the ground in front of him. Ears stanned, he crawled over the tuber and looked out on the Rorschous' emplacement. Outside, a mobile

Isuncber supported a double time unit. Only one arm was operational, which accounted for the thirty second pause between blast clusters. Schozs labored over the second arm. When that barrel activated, there would be a constant blast stream. Stalts had lost track of direction, but guessed the gens were trained on Redeye He planeed at Fairner. Shadow and light played wildly over the broad as be struggled to get his arms and the

Lords Stalts froze, looking from Fairner to the Schoxs. It was insone. What kind of some was the kild restricted But Fairner dropped lump, unable to lift the tube into position, face twisted with pum. Stalts touched his cheek, and Fairmer's protty eyes opened. They stared at each other. He leaned next Farmer's half open view plate.

big firetube into position

"If you fire, we're dead." Farmer nodded. Stalts nodded back. No one fived Bammann!

He rode out the shock. A cave-in sounded behind them. Thirty He lifted the firetabe

Twenty. He positioned the kid's hands and got one knee under hamself. Ten.

He knew that even with Faumer's arms balf useless, the kid would make a better shot of it than be could. A firembe was an issue wagon. Mae, women, even a male like Fairne, their possessed special pytche. It took more than training to sense and adjust for the vageries of an imple-monate power stream that liamshed next to you're are. Stafts put his shoulder under the weapon's butt to absorb some of the kids for the kid when it come.

when it came."

Bammani Bammani Bammani

Dust hillowed around them. Building blocks thudded distantly. He almost deepped the tube.

Trive: He fait the launcher activate.

Twenty, Farmer tensod.
Ten.
The tube statemed Statler's shoulder and knocked him hackwards, Farmer on top, He rolled over the kid-the tuber too stunned to protect himself—and held on as the primardenated time run outside went us with a best statemen, have

can go up gus observe when you wan so can manage, may sunnang, mind shattening when unempyptfi.

They stared at each other, face to face. The lattle pecket created by their two belins pressed together had saved them, created a sense to breathe with orwen from both hales.

feeding into it. Outside of that tiny space, they were buried in debris.

"Kid?"

Furner's hreath caught.

"We did it, Kod."

"We did it, Kod."

"Dum." Thin." Fairner's lips moved against his cheek.

Dum. This was no fair way to die after what the kid"d just
dooe-valking out a sucking tien unit.

"Come on, Kid. Can you move?"
'Unth.'
Rustling sounded, Fairner trying, but the tuber's
breathing weakened. The rasting stoppod. Well"Hey!" The yell startled Stalla's gut into his mouth.
"You aller in theory."

That wasn't a Sobox yelling.

"Kui!"

Fairner didn't answer. Stalts tried to move himself—
and sceamed, precisely what he needed to do anyway.

"Got a live one!"

"Captain?"
"Yos."

"Captain Mi'ing." An attractive woman, she leaned over Stalts. "You two take out this emplacement?" "Yeah." Mi'ing shook ber head. "You got some nakes. One bell of a beng. Can't believe you'es still after."

"Me either. How's my man?"
"Be All right. Where's the rest of your troop?"
"He is my troop."
"Sorry, Sir." She didn't sound sorry.

bye. The Better, Kidd<sup>22</sup> Stalto held a waster table to Fairmer's laps. The Better Kidd<sup>22</sup> Stalto held a waster table to Eastern of strapacity of the first first stalt and the stalt stalt and the stalt s

s, "Doc." He waved at a med. "Need another push."

"When I get a chance." The man went back to
s, wrapping a smashed thumh.

Stults gritted his teeth. He'd been afraid the meds

Stalts gritted his teeth. He'd been afraid the meds would kill the kad out of ignorance. So he'd told them Fairner was broad. After that, they hurt the kid more than necessary. But he didn't dure complain.

There rescuis was tentative at best. Mi'ng's troop, a bundred and fifty strong, had communications with the main army. But it was cut off physically-operating behind enemy lines—and Mi'ng badn't bean looking for survivors. Her people spotted the smarked end of Fairmer's freetube and stated diagong for sits power pals. Every time the troop

started diagraig for its power pak. Every time the troop heatenant looked Stala's way, his expression said it was darm had lack they'd diag out two wounded with the tibs. Mi'ing's calculating glances gave Stalts no peace either. She'd at the medica to work on Fairner. So what did

she want from the kad?

"What you think, Cap?"

"That we aren't out of this."

"You ought to rest."
"I am."

The hid's bead slid off bis knee and against State's shoulder. He wrapped an arm around Fairner. They'd lived through too much since yesterfay for him to hold a grudge against the breed. Besides, he needed someone to cling to himself.

"I'll carry you, Cap. Soon's this damper wears off.
I'll carry you out." Fairner drooped lower.
"Just rest."
"Yosh—tharks." Fairner went limp. Dama the kid

Thanks for what?

Facuser still slept when the weed passed to move out.

Expecting to be left, Stalts didn't disturb the breed. But four
widdens should us should filter more correct and heathed

them off. Stalts didn't figure M') ing for either kind or generous. So what did she want from facen?

They made camp that might in the ruins of a malbased horsway. The place recked, but officerd solid walls to put their backs around.

assess universey. The place revenue, to a titlere variety was to preduce the back against. The troop scattered through the werehape, the place of the place of the place of the place of the place. Abandment, Salle she werd in an exhausted beap urelip tamen drain plan to a smallly vat, tucked them reside and sat down, blocking the vat's opening. The accommodations weren't the best to be found—Mit int's records but those—but

better than nothing. Fairmer sucked fastions in silence. Stalkind the same, studying the breach Fairmer'd waiked most of the affectneon and looked ween and tirred, but strenger than this morning.

"Sloop, Cap."

Stalks obeyed without a word, trusting his breed to

Statis obeyed without a word, trusting his broad guard him.

"Cap." A hand tapped his semond shoulder.

"Captain?" Outside the vat, Mi'ing stood alone. Her

too casual, too polite tone grated Stalts's nerves.
"Yeah?"
"We need to talk."

Hands on hips, the mode no move to kneed to their level. So Stabs pushed Farmer, and they both climbed out the kid wrooting him coato a pile of huilding likeles.

"At your command, Captain." Stalls watched her shough a face of ethouston as Faimer backed off to give them

"How good is your taker?"
"Reasonable." He let a note of speculation crosp into

his voice as if hedging the facts in Fairmer's favor. Actually, Fairner was one of the best tabers he'd ever signed—searching else for which he'd nower given the kild credit.

"He took out the time emplacement with hoth arms

paratyzes: "He did." No use trying to deny st. "I placed the tabe for him, wrapped his hands around st, held up the back end. He did the rest."

"Could be do it again! Do it above before above?"

Looking for a scarrifice. And why loss one of the own! A captain mended to be popular come recommend time. The ARMY was internseed women to some finance when the come for than when the own and the country of the half to be a very good soldiest to be premisted in Perpis master more. The more people you had, the most scarrify you and they empyed. One man did not make a troop. The master and the records were failed for his popple, his captain which do would be noted. He and Faunce were more in the word. Except he was still a captain. That deal's the happen that the country of the c

until the accounts closed. He shock he head:

"He heast" slept. He's stretched on damper. I would't het your lives on him. Mine, I've got no chooc.

"You've wong."

Suits carefully straightened his suspinited leg.
"I need a Second. 'M' improposed a boot on the

"I need a Second." Mi'ing propped a boot o block next Stalts's splint. "Mine dropped in the first fire." "What about your lituie?"

"He's just acting, Jen'ta Jender."
That was too obvious.
'I don't know! have favors to call m." He hed. "Fill
have a too phelon accounts close."
'You can do that anyway, from the safety of a
second's side. Anything's safe than sitting how without legs."
He'd heen waiting for the threat. If he didn't
surrender Farant. Mir in would abundon them. March she'd

lowe him anyway. Maybe not. Reacting an officer earned reward points. Still—Darie. If Mi'ing was serious, he could save his shield. "Let me talk to hum-alone." Mi'me hessiated. "Whatever, Don't take loan."

"No."
She moved away
"You hear?" Fairner, howeved meaner now than when
the conversation had begun.

"Yeah." Farmer knelt heade ham. "Trust her?"
"No."
"Its a rocal deal. Taku it. Can."

"You want to join her?"
"Sure." But the kild took too long-lying.
"They know what you are."

"Most people do." Still lying. Farmer didn't want any part of this troop. Rubble crunched Farmer stood.

"I'll take you both in." Mi'ing had been savesdropping. "Incod people. You need a troop. Just do this emad for me."

Sulus strained his neck to get some kind of view of Mi'ing's face. Her voice was wrong.

Mi'hag's face. Her voice was wrong.

"Make your life casy." She spoke over his head to Fairner. "Make your Capitain is life easy. After what you've survived already, this 'll be shifm' easy." "Could you lay it out, Sur?" Fairner sounded so subservient, it erated Stalta's

meros. The isk was more that proper with him.

"I'll demonstrate every detail," she said, voice suddenly husky. "Come along to my querters."

Mi'ng buckoned. What Stalts could see of her expression looked burgry, leaving no doubte as to what she offered now. Fairner tenued. "Cap". Stalts hostitated.

offered now. Fastner tensed. "Cap?" Stalts hosstated. Fasmer started to go. He grabbed the man's bandolier "No. We're too bred for deals tonight." And through both armored hides, Stalts felt Fastner's

And through both armored hides, Stalls fell Fairner's relief. The kid took a backward step, planting himself at Stalls's shoulder. "You're making a mistake." My ng spon away. Her retreating footstops echoed load in the ruins, and a house method senior. Stalls's feet, all the a health of the

become puffed against Stalts's face like a backlash of rage. Farmer similatered. "All right, Ksf?" "Yes, Sur."

Respect. It startled him. But Fairner's tone rang true, and it felt good. After all the failtree this store, it felt damagood, even if they'd just condomned themselves to slow death. "Com'on, Cap. The wind is nasty." Fairner wrestled him back to the vait and started to

shows him mode.

"No." Stalks balked. "Till sit watch. It's your turn to skeep."

"Decen't much matter does it?"

"No." He slumped Mi'ng's people would walk away regardless.

So the laid stuffed salvaged raps beneath his broken lee, providing manager comfort at least, and lunged him near,

sheltering the larger holes in his armor.

"You All right, Kid?" Doubts gnawed. He'd jussobhed Paires of a night with a tousty female body-a prospect
a darm night better than this.

"I'm fine."

"You sare you wouldn't have liked a little stroking?"
"Not from her."
"You ever sleep with lva?" The words spilled ou

unexpected
"Yes, Sir." Fairner's voice broke. Staltt's jaw
cleoched. "I'm sorry if that offends you. Hoved her."
Stalts forced his stech apart. "We all loved her.
Kad." Which was too true. He asked her to many him once
But she wouldn't give up the rest of the teory, loved them all,
family. If she quat fighting, she'd never so them again. He

didn't ask twice. He should be outraged to learn she'd knowingly slept with a broof-ward't. Via loved people-that's all, and he couldn't imagine a man who loved Iva letting the likes of Mi'ing touch him. It beosted has respect for Fairner "Key your helim lamp." He put a band behand the

"Key your helm lamp." He put a band beband the kid's behind and hagad it nacer. Light glowed, illuminating Farmer's face. He stard at the kid's toary eyes and quivering lay. Even coasted with days of grame and sweat, the kid was pretty, but worn to the home, preves raw, check twittbeing from too much damper.

### Mi'ing meant him no good. Rage bubbled up. "The bitch." He let his head drop. Fairner's arm settled over him. The light went cut.

"You hart, Kid?"
"It's All right. Sleep."
He violded, started to drift, then snapped awake again

"Don't sell me out, Fairner," His heart matheast.
"Don't go insaking of bucness you think in for my own down
good. My'ing will love me now no malter what. And don't do
it for duty or homor. Whatever searcide massion My'ing's
thought up, it only to ears her kill perint. Wen't makes down
it of difference to this bettle or a de'that we seld it that way
first. The bitch'll for sure claim the time kill. She can't do that
whith other of an a low."

with other of us alive."
"That's what I figure." Fairner's head sagged.
"Thanks for stopping me out there."

"Thanks for offering to go."
Fairner's arm tightened around him. The kid shuddered. Stalts lay his head down and slept deep.

They woke to the rumble and quake of beavy bombardment in the distance—a big ship sizzling the planet. The question was who 's' Fairner wriggled outside and crouched at the vat's

opening.
"We're slone, Cap."
M'ing had moule good on her threats.
"I--" A ground well slammed Sailts silent. When
things settled, he wngsjed toward Fairner. "Better move."

Fairner pulled him out into murky dawn, picked him

up and started walking.
"You can tall laws me, Kish."
"You can tall laws me, Kish."
"You can tall the me, Kish."
The mest grow darker as the day wore on. Authorize
dather singeged the sky and weighted the our making it difficult
frieding as shelter, a such place to sky-only traversed the first
middle of per-invessor fire largest. From his pertits on Farmer' a
row will be such a such place to sky-only traversed the first
middle of per-invessors fire largest. From his pertits on Farmer' a
row will be shall be filtered the middle benchmarker skyoped.
Farmer webbold, falling. Skille iddn't know how the
ferred had gotten them that for "Evitorization convertions in some

his feet and minaged to steady, but a sound escaped his chest.

Stop.

Stop.

Stop.

Stop.

Stop.

Stop.

Stop.

Until both his feet skidded, and
they went down, the kelf a mas slamming the ground. Stalls
rolled free. Famer's helm opened, and his bedy convolved,
stranging on dry henves.

Stalts lay still. Holes gaped in his damper, but with

stronging on dry harves.
Soals by a viii. Holes gaped in his denseer, but van
Soals by viii. Holes gaped in his denseer, but van
entrienced the damage properties up his spins, alweyli
gaped to present the properties of the properties of the
Lord of the properties of the many fairness.
Def it to post to prese the finispers to be man't intrinsel.
Def it to post to prese the finispers to be man't intrinsel.
The properties of the properties of

thoughts, trying to make his peace. "Sorry, Cap."

"Don't be an idiot. You did good. You did fine." He hugged the bened's shoulders. "Not good enough."

"Why? There someone else you'd rather the with?" Farmer's breath caught. "Yeah. Mi'ing." Stabs laughed. Farmer gigglod. 'Her bous will get ber eventually."

Fairner gageled again-faitned.

"Funny"—Stalts talked to distract the kid. "Funny
how you think you know people. I thought I really knew my
troop. I loved every one of you. But I never knew the twins
were kleptos, you were a breed or that Curly and Iva would

were suppose, you were a vector of that Crys and Iva would inou that from me. Didd't know them at all."

"You're wrong." Farmer's voice shook. "You know what they needed. Took care of them. They weeshaped you, were good people. You know that, which is all that conside."

"Worship's a bet strong." Lying there dying. Stalts knew his troop had never been the richest nor most successful. "I never got them as much as they deserved." "Yesit, you did. You gave them respect."

They deserved that. Hell, Fairner, I'm sorry I never gave you more.

"I got it second hand. From Buggs and Curly, Doyle-His voice broke. He sucked a long breath. "More than I got anywhere else. You took me on, so they respected your

got anywhere each four use me on, so they respected your decision and gave me respect by default."

"Hell. You were forced on me."

"I know. But I didn't tell them." Fairner swallowed a sob. "Gods, Cup, I should be teld them. I should be."

Lat it be. 'He hugged Farmer, pressing his palms to the kid's barrang cheeks. 'They'd have recented the forcing more than you.'

Yesh. They hated people to cause you trouble. They wenthroused you."

"Don't start that again."

"Don't start that again."

"Why? You think I treed to save your life for myself?" Farmer laughted, a weak hucup. "Until last night, I was handing you on my back just to keep them from havinting.

who introduced it let you do:

The yeardid I let you do:

"Cap!" The kid shudderd, thevering uncontrollably,
"I's All right." The kid relaxed, there single stiffend
him. "I's All right." The kid relaxed, then stiffend,
"E's Sall right." The kid relaxed, then stiffend,
"E's Sall right." The kid relaxed, then stiffend,
"Zammers." Salls raused his head and held his hreath. Darne.

Listening with aching ears as the craft flew morer, he recognized the vibrations. Their own. But the crew would never sensor them in this moss. Smoke odded and whirld. The zammers passed overhead. He clung to Fairner. The kid went lunp "Carstains".

He weite with an oxygen pad stuck to his face, feeling no pain at all, just a lightness. It didn't make sense. You don't die this way. Somsone yelped.

"Faimer!"
They held him down
"He's All right," the med said. "Just relax."

Rescund? By gods. Rescued!
"How'd you find us?"
"Captain Mi'mg's troop turned in your location."
"M'me?"

"Well, her lieutenant. Milling didn't make st." Stalts's breath sighed out. "It's harmoned to mices

"Cap" Stalts necked from his hunk, startled. He'd taken transient quarters while waiting for the army to toss him. His

logs were healing, but he didn't have it in him to try to scrounce a troop or beg an officer's slot off some old fneed. There were favors he could call in, but none her enough, none he warmed to collect. So who'd he victime him now?

"Hey, Kid I thought someone scooped you up." Former'd barely stayed in Med two days. The condition then released the kad in was a crime, but Fairner wanted to leave. So Stalts surned his freedom pass. He hadn't expected to see the

tuber again "How're the legs, Cap?"

"Good, but therapy"s a bitch," "Yeah." Farmer waved the pressure brace on his right. arm, evidence of deep muscle reconstruction. "What's up. Kid?" Fairner had that look, working some game. "You got a herth?"

Maybe. Been with friends." Fairner waved behind him, and Stalts noticed the newrest hunks all stood empty. A chill trickled down his spune His stomach veiled a hig unb-unb. But he owed Fairner has life. So he shipped from the bunk and stood his ground as a

pack of the ugiest breeds he'd ever seen filled the susic behind the kid. Speak to me fast, Farmer."

"You still have your shield?"

You retiring "Something like that." off old debts to another officer stack with Farmer

Don't." "You haven't the right -..." But Fairner did, because technically he was still Favrner's captain and manonsoble for providing him a herth. That's how he'd ended up with the kid to begin with, paying

Sweat popped on the kid's forehead, and his cheeks reddened. The breed pack shifted restlessly. The kid glanced hack and wobbled. Stalts's gut wobbled too as he saw the tuber clearly for the first time. Fairner was a ghostexhausted, hone thin, hair patchy, not cating right-if he was eating at all. And he hadn't begun to heal. You self-priying old fool, Stalts cursed himself. He'd ahandoned this man with

nothing. The breed hadn't escaped the battlefield yet. No troop would take him in this condition. The kid would die "Cap. You want a troop?" The kid blinked and someted his your weary, scarnd but defiant, "There's

fourteen of us. Say yes, and we'll get more." "Wha ... " Stalts took several deep breaths before he understood, "Gods Kid He looked from face to monstrous face as the breeds bunched at Farmer's back. They all were that look in their

eyes-the one Fairner used to wear with him-distrust. They wanted to hope, but didn't dars. How had Farmer counted them this far? What seem had the kid pitched? Did they know that captain for sale killed his entire damn troop? He breathed hotween clenched teeth. These breeds could all be more

sapsens than Fairner, but none were passers, were all untouchables, genetic abominations, a captain's nightmareexcept he wouldn't be a captain much longer. Fairner staggered. Alien hands reached to steady him. Stalts caught him first

Fairner blanked, his expression still hopeful. Stalts started to shake his head. But the kid wouldn't look away--

and he owed this man. "Say the word, Sir. And you're still a captain. Give us a shield, and we'll be the lovalist damn troop ever Fauner's voice broke Stalts tugged the kid's head onto his shoulder, esmembering what they'd both lost. Did the memory of his

past troop demand that he do better than captain a monstrouty of breeds or demand nothing less? Faimer'd saved him for the love of the troop. The troop loved Fairner too -- Iva did anyway. He knew that in his gut, remembering things now that he'd removed when he'd been smar in possession of the others-Bures, Rose, Joc. Phil-all of them, Would they havnt ham it he let Fairner dae? The kid straightened and stood back, aligning himself with the other breeds. His gut danced. need officers."

Fairner nodded "Alta-Lacutemant Osh." A huge woman steeped forward, all teeth and hard muscle. Stalts stared. Osh stared him back, her eyes untelligent and quick.
"The rest?" He nedded toward the pack

"All good soldier," Osh answered. "I keep my eye to the regiment broads. You got a good one, sust young." Phil talked like the Realization exploded over him. He didn't have to

retire broke or hag a troop. He could call in debts. Sucks, people would give him broads. "Farmer," he said. "This game you're playing is dangerous "I figure-- " The kid shrugged. "--there's a reason we breed, Cap. I've made this mine. Their eyes met. They know what happened to my last command?"

"They understand, Sir. It wasn't your fault, Most officers try to get them killed." Stalts's lungs seized. His boart stuffered Forgiveness. No one else had offered it-not the review board, not himself. He bit down on his lip, tasting

blood. Fairner, you damn nick "All right." He forced his clenched jaw open. "I'll play. Fairner blinked, his expression muddled with relief

mshment. "Yes, Sir." and ast It felt good, a prize damning hard to win in Farmer's ram:





## CHANGING THE

#### BY S.C. LOFTON

Narcolency didn't stop seven-year-old Jessy Stake from baving a fine time. She couldn't even pronounce her condition's next name. Not that recolorsy really mattered Her daddy told her his science would find a care soon enough for her sudden deep sleep spells. Boy, did she hope so! A person needed to he dam healthy to travel among the starr in soft brown overalls and long, black pertails, little Jess played artistically outside her father's mountain cabin, south of Santa Crez. The two of them had rotten away from the hecter life at Alaska Complex, away from the cold, stark land. When her father wasn't inside the cabin haggling with members, they watched whales migrating north. Or they took nature walks through the woods. So much green, so many nest insects. Everything smelled alive and warm. There was no need to wear her beavy parks like up north. And hetter yet, she didn't have her big brother. Sammy, constantly underfoot, slowing her down. She had important things to do! Her daddy always

and so.

Today was warm and windy, her father stayed inside talking with a representative from the Asteroid Minem Union. Jessy sat outside by the solar collectors using an old focus mirror to statch away a susheum. Burnt wood tinged the six.

A board rested against the calain, and she used the sun to burn an image of a space ship into its surface. A ship, she imagined, made of the best electronics and metals. Best of the best! She had nearly finished her art project when, without warning, she blacked out cold.

NOTES: Kisu Tomita's senior thesis. All multicellular life is based on DNA. There has been no successful argument that has sevarated humanity from the animal kingdom: it is unequivocally honded to the animal. The renetic difference between a rat and a human is twenty percent, between a human and chimpanzee, the renetic difference is less than one recent. Give the charges a million years, and Homo chimps might be asking the question. 'Do I have free will?" The answer as the same as the one for Home samen: negative. No free will. No altraism. Humans are complex cellular organisms responding to stimuli in the envaronment, slaves to the gene. If I shine a bright light into a deer's eyes, it will respond, say, by turning its head. When I shine the light in another deer's eyes, it will respond, say, by running away. Same light, yet another door will respond, say, by blanking. Three deer, same stamping, different reactions Do we conclude that door have free will

War and peace, civilization and runs, love and hate are thome separes; cycle; repetition for thousands of years. Emotion remains our only constant. Home sapien has not changed. The genes rule, death as stalling the fields For all practical purposes, we are still cave dwellers sitting by the compfire, premian, holding our M-16's in our harry ears. Before humans to our Sony Walkmans with our harry ears. Before The DNA could assured our from will, them for davies.



When burnanty mastered electricity, the way a cut masters the more it weakened the chains. When humanity mastered gravity, the way bords mastered flight, it weakened its chams porther I will master the DNA molecule the way humanity has mastered muchines, and break the chains forever.

Her viotads were a dutant memory. No longer a little red. Jessica Stake was twenty-four and vice president of her father's company, ClaimStake Teleminias and Remote Shipping. Headquartered on Point Hope, Alaska, inside the Arctic Circle, her family's company was the largest international debutal minute high on Farth. Her black have were short. She used no facial or body co-metics. There were too many goals to accomplish; she didn't waste energy on tryvial vanity Mars needed people on it, not robots. A strict veretarian diet, though more for her narcolensy, kent her thin; maybe a tad too thin according to an ex-romantic interest. Her brother nextered her often: Get a late! Fall in level Live more. work loss! When Mars had prople on it, then she'd heed his advace. For her peace of mind and mild distraction, she collected sculptures, obscure ones. All else went to the wayside. Mars needed people. Even one person would do

fine. Any life at all. Dressed casually for today's big news, she walked alongsade Jasper Stake, her father and CEO, soward subcontrol room SE 12. The results of the Barner experiment were ready. although she suspected her father wasn't concerned. That had been bothering her for the last couple of months, sa if her Dad knew something everybody else didn't. Nevertheless, before they went mende, the voiced support. "Cryogenic suspension

is going to work. I just know it

a careful answer. "Cryo-suspension will not work on the Barrier. There is only one way to break it, and you will do it." "What's that mean?" "It means we are late," he answered, brushing off the guestion. A little shorter than she, be nested up seriously at Justica. "After this meeting, I have something to tell you about your namplemer. We will not stay for questions."

"Okas

"Good: Let's proceed Heads up, no smile," be quipped and opened the door. Room SE 12, located on the southeast side of Alaska at was falled with telerobotic controls, but for the Barrets experiment, it had been specially fitted with TDX broteleractry mar and an onal animation table. Three well-dressed VIPs sat around the animation table, seemingly bored and chilly, Jessies recognized all of them: Momar Zmen, a Nambian representative from Tomita Vanity Industries, Dr. Clare Bonnet, ClaimStake's senior bao-researcher, and Glenda Starling, Orbit Net's ton documentary reporter, accompanied by her camera took. She knew Mr. Zmeri was sniffing around for Tomsta Van, but O-Net's media trash stunk the worst.

As usual, all the chairs were taken. A headshored teleorerator noticed. "Here one of you can at here." "No thanks," said Jessica, waving a hand. "We will stand." Then to Dr. Bonnet, "What are the results? A middle-aged woman wearing a cashmere sweater angwored, "Negative, I can Glenda from O-Net cut her off. "Does this mean ChamStake will no longer continue to teleform Mars?" The O-Net camera turned on Jasper Stake to possibly suck up a juicy

morsel for the documentary.

"Save your questions, Ms. Starling," he said with ace. "De Bonnet, continue for our honorable guest." He nodded respectfully at Momar Zmeri. Honorable guest? Jessica wondered about that. Dr. Bonnet keyed the table. "Last February, two independent spacers whipped off Splay Station toward Marx, totally disregarding the U.N. Multiculture Mission pact scheduled for the following month. Then, 526,324 miles from Earth, both spacers died for reasons still unknown." Three-dimensional icons of Splay Station and the spacers' ship, connected by a purple mission line, appeared

relative to the table's holographic Earth. Dr. Bonnet glanced at the camera. "Despite the media's sensationalism, the indicspacers were not murdered. "Later, two Aussie spacers were assigned by the U.N. to retrieve the bodies. But 526,322 miles from Earth, not twice the moon's orbit, they died. Again, for reasons unknown. Telerobots eventually retrieved the bodies and shaps. To the

date, none of the four international autoreses have determined a cause of death." Icons and scale lines of the Aussie musson flickered above the model table. Dr. Bonnet knyed another set. Jessica noticed Tomita's rep whispering to O-Net's reporter. She watched faces for reactions. missions by different research bases," continued Dr. Bonnet. "using bacteria, plants, rodents, and monkeys were negative Nothing lived past specific distances from Farth." More scale incs and scons appeared. "Data has shown that the hather the organism's cellular organization, the farther it can travel from Earth and live." Remnet keyed the table, and a transmerent blue. sphere surrounded the Earth and its bright icons of failed missions. 'Nothing living,' she said grimly, 'has passed outside this blue sphere. The biotic envelope, or so-called Barrier, was tested today. Until we determine exactly what is killing life. life will go no further than the moon and an orbit

approximately twice that of the moon's." Nobody said anything, but Jessica noticed her father's bored face. A holographic model of a cylindrical multi-smeed, multiaxis robot came into focus opposite the Barrier model. Used to remotely mine astroids pulled into orbit by sail-winches, Crab minors were the backbogs of ClaimStake. "Crab One and Crab Two, modified by TDX Biotelemetry, each carried two Levert morkeys: one in ervorence suspension, the other under normal

life support 'ClaimStake's Crab robots slowly approached the Barner limit." The table model changed scale, zooming in on Crab One and superimposing the monkeys' vital functions and brain waves shightly above the model. "As you all can see, one meter beyond Barrier, both monkeys lost heartbeat, their brains flatlined. Cryoranic suspension had no effect However, we reversed Crab one and two, bringing them back inside Rarrier noint, and immediately both monkeys came to life from clinical death. This happened every time. With both Crobs the results wern identical. Inside the Rumor, life.

Outside the Barrier, death The crabs are now Earth-bound to Splay station. Our data is on modelcard, available to anyone. Any questions? Before a clamor of questions broke out, Jasper said to

Jessica, 'Let's go They made for the exit. Using a covert hand signal Jossica cedered the nearest telecoperator to head off O-Net's reporter. She dishked media trash as much as her father, meely granting interviews. "Where we going?" she asked

curiously. "What about my nercolepsy?"

"To the North Cafeteria, and I'll tell you." Patrons in the North Cafeteria were not surprised to see the CEO and VP stopping in for a meal. Jasper made sure he kept solid relationships with all his employees. Jessica was not good at this, although she worked at being a fair modiator. They scated themselves in a booth. Jasper handed his duscriter a small white hox. When she overed it and saw a place penguin with a purple square on its forehead, she blacked

EXCERPT: the covert recordings of Dr. Donald Kins aboard the Scarlet Borth, enroute to Mazs

I vote to kill her Don't be ridiculous Ridiculous is hardly the word, Kins! She per the whole planet in secondly. Hundreds want to their grayns

because of her manuac ideas. You're missing the point. That is the point. She could have JESSICA: Let him speak, Sam. Why shouldn't we throw

her to the door KINS: In the first place, desnite her changes, she is still a human bonne. She has done what science has been trying to do the last 150 years, on her own, smack in the face of

convention. Her contribution outweighs her delusion. We've removed her ego; let's work with her-as friends and partners. She has a great deal to offer JESSICA: That's very utilitarian, but what if she doesn't cooperate? Do we hand her over to the government for trivil?

SAM: Yesh, right, like that's not a soke. KING-For once, he's correct JESSICA: Granted, if she doesn't cooperate, we'll hold her until we organize the map. Then give her to her brother in

Japan, Agreed KINS: Arreed SAM: Nay. Death is my vote.

Eacht months later, Jessica lost her father when his shuttle collided with an errant crab minor. Rumors of assassination were quickly ruled out. It was accidental, point of fact, Nevertheless, ClaimStake's chief of security, Samuel Stake, had taken at nersonally, even though no evidence, however minute, could be found to support an assassination hypothesis. Jeassea could not find a way to relieve her brother's

conscience. They began slowly drifting arost To make matters worse, the board was trying to push her cen. CEO Jessica Stake sat in her office thinking about her father's strange behavior before his death more than the board's petty tactics.

Suddenly, semething by the office door caught her eye Wasps in Alaska? Jessica sprang from her chair, alarmed by the intrusson. Four of them flew in formation, one behind the other. They flew a gig-gag pattern over the couch, under the place coffee table, circled the Madell sculpture-eatting closer to her with each pass. She glanced at the security deck: no wave intrusion, no bio-alert, no tronic penetration, no missile launching. All read clear and safe. When she looked back, the black-vellow insects zoomed into a helix pattern around her netite body, close enough for her to hear them buzzing. But outright curiosity stopped her from pressing the panic button What could they be up to? Several possibilities zapped through her mind, down dead-end paths of foars and reasons. Only one nossibility went somewhere meaningful. A wasp broke

formation and stung her on the wrist. Before she screemed,

### Changing The Universe

she tasted concentrated orange. The pain immediately ended for currosity. She hatton-planched the intercom. "Samuel! Get up here! Now!" Jostica quickly ruled out assassination: the wasps were

Jestica quickly ruled out assassination: the wasps went too obvious. They weren't holodecopy because he wrist had swolles to a throb. She had spent most of her life indoors, and having nove been stong, it do did not fished, as muset sting could have this had. That in itself kept her watching for another statick. Where'd they go? she wordered. Who had let them

into the complex? Her competitions? No, they weren't smart caough to put a pattern on living organisms. Her brother risbol unto the office. He was opposite to Jossos in all the small issues—like his long, sandy hair to her chopped, likek hair—but they were doubt and to their faither's

corporation, the major name. "What's wrong?" he asked, putod in hand.
"There are four wasps in here."

Waspe on Point Hope?

Nonder-draw."

"Do st."

After a futile search, Jossica ended up staring out her window. Water deribbled down the glass from the instant defrost. The special window had been installed per her request she needed to see her interplanetary ships. Sum stood behand her with his bands in his pockets. She water for him to

break the silence, feeling no need to explain the event further.

"Modified insects," he said tentatively, "would have shown up ho, especially wasps in these parts."

Josepa prised her wrist to show him the sting mack. "Then

explain... The welt had faded back to her pale skin. Premontion, more than fear, silenced her. "Yes? Explain what?" "Nothing, Mr. Stake, You're dismussed."

"Yosh, right. Do you have any hot-minute changes for the hoord meeting."

The man could be tactful when he wasted to, thought less;ca. He would not come out and ask her if stress had something to do with wasps. Simply, his indirect consens became a knowled condition, a record one. Lately, they couldn't find a way to agree on anything but the most important issues. Both dufficted righting over trivial issues like forefings. "No

"I'll send up a hio-team with independent scanners. If warps are in this office, they'll he found!"

"Do that." In Journa moved done to the window, unlinear, Affett he learn't legal to examine the wars. Not is based in jury; emained. Only for a second dud the done the prerposion; resulting could not be trained with so enaity. Whe could make wage that clever? She stread to search for them, and the wage that clever? She stread to search for them could make wage that clever? She stread to search for them could be supported to the street of the stre

resignation from ClaimStake Telemining and Remote Shipping. She wouldn't let a greedy horde of shareholders ruin her family's dream of putting the first human colony on Mars. But what would she tell corporate wolves about wasps and the dampher who failed to heat the Barrier? The foeling the disappearing wasps and the Barrier ware related would not gr away. She hoped the feeling wasn't desperation. Jessites pressed her forethead to the cool glass and cast s

Jessita pressed har forehead to the cool glass and cast a ferrambon also not the multiple slapera below. Only to exnistry history was trained, with specially contract to comp critical properties of the contract of the conceptance of the contract of the contract of the conceptance of the contract of the the hand saw otherwise. With not sail the submodey? After all, no leven or general model freak the fatters. C. Limitakita, and all, no leven or general could be better speat. Earth to protoc, they reasoned profulful the made over a studie in other vestures. Nothing profulful the made over a studie in other vestures. The con-

Below her, in the machine yard, key her father 's legacy her cores and he soci, in the mack and mers. Small telemanty craft robots whapped to and planmated from this corbit whapped to and planmated from this corbit shear that the state of the state of

Down there, in the mather of human strates and mechanical flower, need to remind-high I shipper. Add Organ and Sacriflands.—Based some engige. Make stand quitted reducts combulered to the standard of the standard standard some promissed to, would half their mests in the moods and examinor of Cham-Shake's montaneants to suppresses. Massawa contribute of Cham-Shake's montaneants to suppresses. Massawa contribute Marset dwared the first [6]. Humberded to blue service in plays to resulted and bluehold his aspectral gaves persong through the were always cold. She threades a partal in the worldow condomnance, hoping always it wouldn't descend uses a leid-tobused of L-Shape including or sense the softly base of Elsepa and the L-Shape and the softly shared in the softly hand of L-Sape and the softly shape and the softly shared in Language.

State. Seg not raminy a work would be wasted or me Fasset to break the Sarrier.

Two eagur-faced acountechts broke her quiet worry. She thought to dismiss them, instead, she left her office and strote to her slooping quarters. They would not find anything. If the warps defeated the soun once, they would twice more. Quite unsappectedly, her mose began to girk fareachy.

Not much occupied her windowless sleeping quarters, she did not splarge on frevolous comforts. A hed, a germent rack, a dissect, a desk, a multi-media terminal, and a few other what

note wern all the furnmenting the required. Everything the but nell-more to the Barrier mitodied the queue amount the musil: mode terminal. In distancy, it supposes amount the musil: mode terminal. In distancy, it supposes the present pulsars and analyticage the that relating the Planet Barrier. Next to the laser printer was a Klein bottle, a gall from her harden, who upon presenting it sail at was a gall from her harden, who upon presenting it sail at was a gall from her harden, who upon presenting it sail at was a gall from her harden, who upon presenting it sail at was a functional set prior to monster dust control. She thought the properties of the control of the properties of the class that She was use too students or reveal of their. She didn't fail and such pook business—made, locating, proceeding—thing to cein pleating.

whyserapor were telling john, and her father flow by to sold the few by the first water government makes. The sold, strateful, and the few watering consists makes, the sold, and the few watering consists makes the sold, and the first water flower flower

stylus. Two sharp beeper: Donald Ray Kine, professor of Cellidar Microbiology Main, age 471/Curently insured at Hilland State (MCRE, EDUCATION, ORIGIN). See perused the information gleaned from low-scenny databases. As perused the information gleaned from low-scenny databases. As Acids from Kine Viving in the same city she was born in, Acids from Kine Viving in the same city she was born in the Barriers. Still, the could not table bits name from the broughts. What did Kine think about the Barrier's Jesses.

thoughts. What did Kins think about the Barrier? Jesusca decided to met him in person and ask him how his name looped through her mind.

Thing Sam's Reservation Third program, she illegally teoryed a parking space on the University's crowded parknck by bumping another jopper. Then she left a wake-up call for Sam on his system, informing him that they'd attend for Sam on his system, informing him that they'd attend

Professor Kin's morning lociner.

Despite ber ticky nose, Jesson had fallen straight into a dreamless sleep and didn't wake until her chimese alsem sounded. Faint cinnamon hanging in the six cought her attention, but not enough to distract her from the wasp modern. Six would crack the farmer or respire, She could facile The nevrous twang remanded her of mornings before final examination of the six of the

She drested appropriately for college campus covycomment: a light sweater, sandals, and years. Into her terminal misrocon, she called, "San, see you up and dressed to go?"

She ran a comb through her harr, waiting. "Nope, I'm potting a suzion," cacked the speaker. "What's with this weed

wske-sqr? You got a meeting tiday, you know you do."
"Poutpose it until fifteen hundred."
A long nause. "The scanners did not find... anything conclusive."
"So what! Meet me on the joppier platform," she suspeod.
'Stop by the chow hall, too, Bring us some milk and a few of

those citamene rolle, they smell great."
"What!"
"You have fire in five." She chicked off. In the elevator of no soveral, floor god; platform, the woodleast what feiture a five source. In our god, and the source is the source of the source

platform's solar-clear roof. Jessica tolerated the chilly North Plains climate, but the missed the right sky. Always, the stars were on her made. No boad members had yet arrived, she noted. All the better, she dish't not them underfoot. Instead of having JESSICA STARE - CEO stencified on her parking spot, it read, SCARLET FOOL. Her nickname

ner parking spot, it read, SCARLET POOL. Her intention was coincid by Claim Stake competitors because a her continuously dumped profits and building resources on a lithiuse Mars. The nickname did not bother her. It did, though, drive her coverdent to worry warts. A CEO shouldst tucyet a jibe, they told her. The board would use that apariest her, too, in gis own pedig way.

"Stake-open," she wored to the quarter door on her child belie spoint. It is wang prompt, monemariny relicting the ran sate her syste. Insulin, the two-start ravial pileter than the property of the property of the range of the property of

resking sack and two cartons of milk on the concole dash.
"What!" Is sounded indipared.
"What!" Is sounded indipared.
"You're densed for the Blain weather, I see," she quipped saccassically. "Khaks shorts week for you. The Farward tenth is reals, but matable for our year. Ever whine is free.

except for your holster and puted. Go get a wind-breaker, or lose the pante?

He dish't respond right off, he tied his long his in a proposal fiest. The puted stay, We're agoing into public. And if you had a life, you'd know how etirred up the college scene in sow. He boasded the jopper, not cone sking his other oyes off his problem sister. "Latil you tell me what up going on, way've nothing comine but a had time. Purthermore. I sext in

back-up to Blimos trailinal has might. Out ti?

"And within you're boo-house, I want to know why your noon is swellen red and how you can smell rolls through air agulty control sill the way to the Eithen. Cot st?

Being accustomed to his mannerisms, she dubt 'interpret Being accustomed to his mannerisms, she dubt 'interpret Being accustomed to his mannerisms, she dubt 'interpret Being accustomed to his mannerisms, she dubt interpret Being accustomed to his mannerisms, she dubt to the red and the strength and th

me that face," the challenged. She'd seen many different shades of it in the past months. Anyone cles in his position would these resigned or assistanted her. "What had of highest response, you expect? Voy've "What had of highest response, you expect? Voy've anybody, you don't go out." be told her trath, sagar's adgarapping has seatmoness unto emotional bets. The whole Alaska camp is fed up with you. This wasp thing is all over the comp? He punded forward with no open plain. This jiel to

camp. "He pulsed forward with an open paim. "Init gives inthoused one more massen to pash you out. Case closed."
Hiding her saud fisce, Jesses looked away to the Arctic Tensi mpropar scraps from the south-end recycle bins. He would not be ignored. He jerked a lock of her hair. "Quit st, Sam!"

"Then listen to me," he countered. "You're driving ClaimStake into the ground. The perma-frost is more flexible than you...you're killing us, one day at a time, and father didn't give you that right." When he mentioned their father, the

### Changing The Universe

refused to let it hook her. "I know what I'm doing. Are you coming along with me or no?"

He doin't pender long. "Yes."
Losses finalized their rout by shutting the quarter door and

statistica quytomas checki in altanea. Tabbino gazzebate ingungiriloyarop johi, mosqo indan, and solit chang all mad ingungiriloyarop johi, mosqo indan, and solit chang all mad de Alakka at. The Diougetant dipole growty fault owninged the Alakka at. The Diougetant dipole growty fault owninged to the roard poles, which mad he seen and like acreay. She fault in the control poles, which mad be roard poles and the least. The Diougetant dipole mad the best and the poles of the latest the poles of the solit control for the poles of the latest and the poles of the latest and the latest and the poles of the latest and the latest and the poles of the latest and the latest and the latest and the poles of the latest and the latest and the poles of the latest and the lates

like postponuments.

EXCERPT: from Kisu Tomita's resignation letter to the

dean of Wisconsin Institute of Evolutionary Genetics. ... [The world population can be divided into various major cultures: Eastern Western Islamic Christianity by race of economy, by a riculture or cyberculture, etc. Of the lasting cultures, at some point in their development, all worshiped spirits, or deities, or God. An atheist culture is nonexpetent: aithough there are atheasts, they cannot statism a culture. From the very beginning of Home samen, it has sought to worship a power outside and greater than itself. Stiff and vircenus opposition has fasled to quell the Word of God Natural selection cannot wood out this presistance of spirit, and cultures that have rejected God are extinct. Before humanity combed the Earth, its cultures lived in and orientated in virtual isolation. Yet each clung to a religion. As Damascence said, "The knowledge of God is naturally implanted in all." Else how do the anthropologists explain polytheism in cultures that were isolated from each other in their beginnings? Even as science Assured, their remains inscathed. God is with us all. a) All cultures have worshiped a power outside and greater than themselves. b) Most cultures originated and developed isolated from each other, none without ties in the secretari realm. c) Therefore, God exists. God's surnature is the DNA. man of all life styclf, He has revealed it to me. I will not permit a semor board of heathers to itseen me. God will do that, and, ultimately. He will judge us all.

Ecocia and Sun's popier textical above the consoled cuewity Textus of consumer Normal, Illimonia Prophies dewity Textus of Colorador Stream, Illimonia Prophies decovidence of Colorador Stream, Illimonia Prophies detegration of Colorador Stream, Illimonia Colorador Stream, Process hancers Irang off Morker Murphy's Cammo and Barped Prophies International Colorador Stream, Cammo and Campan in the benears incopans in English and Spanish secrelled against their hydrodirect—sected silicon surfaces. Campan socially Institute of Colorador Stream, Illinois Strea

Jessica took a scan. "There's approximately seven hundred hearthests down there. Are they all students?" she insqueed, eying to read a harner slopin.

"Students for the most part, they're the principal instigators, but protests have heart springing up all over the campuses. It started here a couple of months back. They believe ISI and the roverment are belind the almorability.

high rate of infertility, the standard sterilization consperses benk."
"How is ISU connected?"
"Because of Cortland's haploid experiments. They think

he's working with the White House."
"Well, as he?"
Sam inked. "Like I wouldn't tell you if I knew something

his tiss? Give me a break."

Jessica didn't believe the government would coverfly initialize or maintain a sterilization program. The White House would flat out do it and dare arrone to care.

House would that out do it and dure anyone to care.

As their joppier passed over the carowl, her heart work out to the protesters waapped in rise. She often regretted choosing her father's strict teachings instead of going to college.

Three tones from the joppier dush signaled preliminary

docking, Jenian and Sam Jocked their sowiel reast into place. The campus corthogo grew in delta. From hailings, they park racks a mane od the quand drop—area. A green strobe, mounted antit to each park rack it high beam receiver come. It is also be rightly, indicating automatic systems were uncomposed. From the variange point, 150° y spiratus looked park in the park of the three under the park of th

"When he?" Seen soled trappiently.
From her research, the had amounted the routs to Kins'
From her research, the had amounted the routs to Kins'
From her research, the had amounted the routs of the head of the highest of the head of the highest of the head.
Follow and the research of the head of the highest of the head of the highest of the highest of the head of the

Before Sam could memond, they rounded a corner, and Jessica collided with a curly-headed youth. The student's surprise canceled his manners. He zoned right in on her face. "What an univ red nose you have!" he sabbed "Beat st, punk!" Sam lashed, stepping in front of the student to usher Jesuca into the noisy lectors and tonum They took a seat in back, on the highest tier. She felt relieved that only a few students gave them a second glance. Yet, a tense feeling radiated from the class, not the carerness she expected from a Freshvouth class. These were not the faces of eacurness, but resembled the fear she had seen in her composate circles-fear of failing. Pressure pulled the students alrin tent armas their checkbones, the sensors of few concess in their future. There would be no place in their world for the uneducated: the technically unskilled died early. Desperation had a smell as well as a face. That smell sharmened when the seindly professor entered the lecture hall accompanied by a silent pall falling over the class. The thin, casually dressed man did not souander a moment. He supposed right into the thick. This morning we will cover the cellular organization of interdependent, interrelated parts of encuryote cells and then parasitic origins." He flicked open his remote pointer. "We

will begin with the energy-producing mitochondria organelle

of animal colls."

Professor Kins kayed his pointer to dim the lights. Ten holograph-projection rods were strategically located in the lecture hall, lending visual access to all in attendance. An ovoid-shaped burnial cell appeared above each rod on a constitution of dusting blue focus fasters.

or containing ofthe footis literative. WITHOUT WARNING, JESSICA LOCKED ONTO THE MODEL. This was not part of the lecture! Someone had gotten in her head like a drug had laten over her foreigness. She tasted raspberry and thought of first hand vegetables. The bold model acted like a three-dimensional manemouse, that triggered her memoriss. Everything in her peripheral vision field away, Second, too, Feet footing the triggered her memoriss.

Physical penalty is overtook her body as hidden momentus became unblocked. She could not move, Furat dog this was chance to send her into flight. Struggling gave way to forcemities, now. And momen had pulled off a short that the forcemities, the send of the country of the country of the herself from appraising it. Her memories suffuried. Subconscious syndrotic both shape. Predimental rules of all botto life on Earth filled her thoughts. Symbols began corresponding with her families momens and were crease corresponding with her families momens and were crease. Findamental levels of organization came first particle, atom, molecule, macronolousle, subcollibiles.

...The DNA-nch nucleus resembled a knobby sumpkin wrapped in a cellophane-thin porous nuclear membrane; mode it, off-center, no bigger than a grapefruit floated the nucleolus responsible for ribosome manufacture. Draped partially off the pumpkin-sized nucleus clung a chunk of avered, winding rough endoplasmic reticulum that transported, highway style, polysomes to the smooth roads of the endoplasmic retoulum, then to the Golgi body. The Golgi complex stacked up like different sized pancakes: it packed protests for cellular export, sorted, and stored molecules. ... Through the cytoplasm swam rod sausago-shaped mitochondria, complete with their own sets of DNA. The cells' mobile energy producers... More information bloomed in Jessica's consciousness, more than she could handle, as if someone had opened her skull and poured in soapy water to clean away the dirt and expose shiny new memories of hiology. She tried to break her mind free, and

failed.
...mitochondria organoliles trapped the energy released from food breaking down. Thousands of mobile power plane using placestood to produce A l'Philestraty...
Jossaca trad to focus on her brother's face, and it faded to the cell model.

Jessics thought of the father.

BLACKNESS CAME AS A COLD SLAP, ENDING
THE MEMORY EXPLOSION. Reality slowly returned.
Someone chewed on a new can, the lasted strawbury. Dead

came, too. She couldn't understand what had happened to her Handal! Thousands of purple hands calmed her, soother the antiety. Then an old, familiar feeling crept up on her. She blacked out.

Jesusca regamed consciousness in a small office, but indiging herself on the floor dight't better her anymore.

Nacology had seen to that. Chair logs were the first things her vision focused on. "Where are we?" Sam knoth boards her. "Hold, Sin," he suggested, no letting her up right sway.
"No. Cut me off this smally carpet!" Kooping quiet, be helped her into a listilher chair. After her disorientathen possed, the asked again, "Where are we?"

He took the remaining chair. "Kins' offices. He's disamong the class one. "Vo started or retick when you have a received when you was a received when you was a received when the contract of the contract of

understood them. "I don't know what's going on, Sam, truly.

It's like waking from a dream, etcopf vivrally remember cellidate microshopy, who are swind cannounty. The cellidate microshopy, who are swind cannounty. The That want's a macclopic spill?

"No." Same crossraged her. Waspe cannot disappeer, and may also what if they were made to bod, the day dail. Comis found for minus tensor of DNA, we are sell not true of the DNA belongs to march. Though we will be by the time are minus to the compared of the property of the compared was to be a supplied to the compared of the property of the compared was the compared with the compared was severed by the compared with the compared was the compared with the compared with the compared was the compared with the compared was the compared with the compared with the compared was the compared with the compared with the compared was the compared with the

information, "Josica stated sincerely. "You thought I stressed on the warps, duly tyou?" No line in his face. "Yes, a little maybe. I'm your bother, not your robot." Jesseta tilted her head back. "I smell Dr. Kins coming."

She straightened up, crossed ber legs, and masked any revealing expressions. Shead up, Son. (Nov inm an option to sit down in his own office." Dr. Kins emtered, then lockled the door. He had that hannes contenting-sweepyon-olso-doen't lock about him. He strin was African does not specified as paperised him. His strin was African does see that the string of the string of the string of specified as the string of the string of the string specified heads afrom sea conservative-obset, and his face.

seemed to be locked in a permanent scowl of measures.

"We can talk," said Kina. "Exvesdroppers are not welcome several here."

"For a teacher, your in-room security is most expensive."

"What can I say..." im a multi-moome kind of gw."

"What can I say..." in a multi-notion iscuring is most expensive.

"What can I say..." im a multi-notion kind of gay."

When neither Jessica nor Sam spoke, Kins addressed
Jessica. "My Micro Teachers hit you pretty good. Sorry. But
I am elial you kent you remointment."

### Changing The Universe

Sam folded his arms defensively. "What do you know about it? "With your father's permission, he let me code your brain's learning center with a lifetime of bioscionce and much

behavior, but we will trigger those memories later. That's all I can tell you now. The Teach technique is known only to me. That classroom holograph is one of the 3-D mnemons: triggers," he said without one trace of empathy in his voice.

"The process of coding your neurons takes an extramely long time. Not to mention that the Micro Teachers are my life's Jessica surveyed him coldly, not letting any hints through

her mask. "I do not believe you He nointed to a shelf behind Sam, "You will, kiddo., Sammy, hand your sister one of those hardcopy trades." Sam did not move.

Give me one. Sam: lef's give him sope," she recisested 'Pick any article and read it,' Kins cuipped. 'See if you can understand it." Sun handed her Coll magazine. Kins, she thought, was a wfully cooky, and his ward manners were starting to get on her pervea, but she randomly flipped to an article on blocking negrotransmitters. "Have a seat, doctor," Sam pushed the remaining char his direction

Good graf! A free thinker." Sam would not be gooded. As Jessica road, no one spoke, although Kins hommed

something stuped She felt a chill. The technical sargen in the article made sense. Understanding came as easily as if she were reading from the Unified Commercial Code and Orbital Statutes. She would neither figish reading it, nor let Kins, who watched her

setrently see her anxiety. She tossed the resemal into the treats. "This proves I have been affected, nothing more, because your alibi depends on a dead man. I need reliable, testable verification." 'And you're going to get it," he countered. "How smch do you know about Tasso and Kayoko Tomata? A standard profile. They founded Tomsta Varsty. They

were assassinated some years ago, and their son controls TooVan. My father conducted a few manor business deals with TecVan." 'Not minor! Jasper was good friends with Taiso and Kayoko. They were scientists of vision. Jasper agreed to provide mechanical technology to complement TeeVan's biotechnology. Together, they had planned to land the first massive colony on Mars and beyond, way before the UN got

Jessica and Sum spoke almost simultaneously. "We know nothing of these plans "Just listen" he cracked. "Kesa Tomsta, their daughter, changed those plans by assassinating her pagents. She is, in her own right, a bulliant geneticist who had the best trachers in the world. Like a fool, though, she conducted radical genetic experiments on herself. This we know for sure." He spit out the words like he hated testing them, then be softened his tone. "Your dad and I go way hack, Joss. You know, we built the Santa Cruz caban for your mother before she died. They loved you both termendonsily. When Jasney Institute monthly from Kisu Tomita's brother-that she is behind this condemic of infertility, he also discovered she wants you for her scheme Evidently, she has a plan for the world, the human generood specifically, and it seems you're part of it. "Of course, this frightened Jasper to no end. He sought

me and the best way to propure you for Kiss Tometa. She's not to be stopped. I personally believe she wants more than your J-"Then take her out of the game!" offered Sam. 'If we

were to give in to the thug point of view," he said, jabbing a finger in Sam's direction, "then you might kill the only person who knows how to reverse the infertility spademic. Tomata, at least, is seventy-five years shead of the rest of us. She producted the Barrier sax years before its discovery, and nobody took her seriously. Now she has us over one big barrel, everybody, if we cannot knock her down a level! "Kisu has the entire genetic map for Homo samen. We got about twothirds married out, but were missing too many pages. She get them first, and she knows how to apply her knowledge to he desires," Kins said with conviction and some hope in his eyes You're our best shot, kid."

Jessaca expected a scatting retort from Sam, but he said nothing. Nother did she. Kips must have felt their redement because he squarmed in his seat and kunt talking as if nothing were wrong. Tomata has only one weakness: her planet-sizes e.go. If she has her sights on you, then you can probably go close enough to her to steal the genetic map. And your best weapon argent her is knowledge. You should be shot, Kins, "Sam and intently, "Fill be

more than happy to notify the Centers for Disease Centrol." Jessica beard control in Sam's voice, and studied Kins for

"No one knows Tomata is responsible except us and two others. If the CDC learns who, then the world learns, too Every two-bit intelligence agency will go after her, which will ruin our opening "Personally. I believe she infected people with a variety of

micro-encapsulated virusus. Kisu had access to the world's largest cosmetic company and several subsidiary food distributors, too. Her operation is global. No other way would be feasible, although the Disease Control Center does know a rotro-wards has managed to turn off a gene complex responsible for coding Acrosome. It's a corresponding encount in the line of sporm cells. Wethout st, human sporm carmot effectively potestrate the egg wall. Males are shooting so-called dads; the problem is, we cannot find the gape sequence responsible. In vatro works fine, but I believe she has gained control over the whole reproductive system, and before long, nothing will work. We must stop her now." The word 'we' irritated her. Not to mention who knew the

truth or what the truth was. Tomits would have to answer to that. Catastrophic events followed a rastr role: in business they came hard and fast. This she knew all too well. She wouldn't make any immediate commitment or mmp to a conclusion based on Dr. Kins' story. Between the truth and Tometa, she decided to focus on the latter. No doubt in her mind, Tomsta would be put under ClaimStakes' microscope. Histony any interest, she reduced Kins, "The Barrier, Dr. Kins, tell me about it, and stop wasting my time He looked burt, but sold bee. "The current experimental groups are approaching the Berrier problem from the wrong

angle. Life can pass beyond the Barrier, but it can only pass Farth's bio-envelope in proups "My experiments will prove a relationship between distance traveled from Earth and the number of organisms. Send one Norwegian lab rat past the Barrier on tele-Crab manor and record at what distance at days. Then send two rate out, ditto. The distance will be twice as far; three rats, three times as far. Before long, we will be able to land a group of ratsrate-or people-on any planet of your choice.

"No other way, Intile Jeas. All the social species are colony-based, right down to groups of cells in a symbiosis. Life cannot exist in solation from other life.

"We can observe the Burrier more closely in social inserts, they have there own Barraer there on the elanet. Ansi take

they have these own Barrier here on the planet. Ants take drawn, farsh, farming into war, domestical spitals the castle, drawn, farsh, farming into war, domestical spitals the castle, which are a spital spital spital spitals and if we separate a white and, or what Sammy here would call a termit, from its colony, it will die. Part give up and simply die. Same with people separated from Earls when the spital spitals are spitals and the spitals are spitals and the spitals are spitals and the spitals are spitals as the spitals are spitals are spitals are spitals are spitals are spitals are spitals as the spitals are spitals. The spitals are spitals. The sp

officiel. Boologuel new book calling this is the acoust for "If! could see our cope-she I could publish my remain by the out of the morth. This would also remove any by the out of the morth. This would also remove any sould Camadolas." A lone part of Kine Tong, the schemol port, could be dashed into, thought Jenses. To be uncertain port, could be dashed into, thought Jenses. To be uncertain con just of Kine Tomits a will apple them to stratule possible and mind, the longer more then any will, and then finder was not just of Kine Tomits a sile pad where to stratule possible the control dippring down into singer, do ship fairs by poople in her position. The good professor, the decided, would most the way that the could be the said that the complete to the could be the control of the could be the said that the count of the country to the country that the country to the country that the country to the country

conduct your rate suprements?"

He granted like he'd wen somethang. "Anytime."

"He granted like he'd wen somethang. "Anytime."

"He granted like he'd wen somethang. "Anytime."

"Yow sounds good," Sam instanted politiely. "I can have a

"Stidde, a jup ratie would do nicely, "he replaced has wettee

"It indeed with sarcasam." As a bonus, Mass Stake, I have a

message for you from Jasper, but I can only give it to you in

your Alaksia Office.

Kins stood and clarged his hunds. "See you temorrow then?"

Sees stepped around Fastica to Kins" desk. "Yee, you will, doctor." He they publed up the cell model from Kans" desk and popped off its side. He testated out a recording cube. "Became your security system is the most expensive down? Them in "is the best. I'm sizes you won't mind me keeping this taped recording, kided."

"I'd now what you think. I knop accurate records, in code, of course."

Sum put on a disputsed face. "Keeping records might get you killed, by Kins."

"Don't summarize your hypothesis with arrogance, smart. My files are well-fost. To be sare."

EXCERPT: from Dr. Kins' andso record. Conference room, aboust Scarlet Berth: SAM: I vote to keep the map within ClaimStake

SAM: I voce to keep the map written Litterscare.

KINS: I second that.

JESSICA: That's new fee you and Sam; what happened
to your scientific responsibility?

KINS: Don't disrespect your menter and your elder.

This is the responsible decision. We can't damp the map into
public domain. It's too much, Jess. Look what happened
when one person used it. Can you insagine what a government.

would do with the control sequences? Here, have a that from this ippo, Mr. Republican, and be a Democrat. Things got out. That's bad enough. We have already changed our universe, our world, in a dy. Let's able some time and relied. The second of the second of the second of the second table as least eight years for anyons on Earth to build an 1-direct capable of defensing the Barrier. We can start by seeding the Micros Teachers' Resolvedge back to Earth. There's turns of LESSICA. I that see 'rm makers as mistake. The cool-

FESSICA: I think two're making a mistake. The people hands at right to know what happened—what was horribly influed on them, on us!

KINS: They will now, but let's give Earth some time to settle down. We need to think this through. After all, we issue been subjected to evolution our whole history. Now, we can control evolution.

JESSICA: Just who is "me"?

AM: The same "we" that made atomic weapons and cuered cancer. This map will start another arms race, but "we" have gotten this far down the road to wherever or to whatever immanity is going. I say we want free years and ask consolves how much knowledge we let back to Earth. Agreed?

KINS: Year.

JESSICA: Oksy, agreed. We discuss this again, but with Tomita, if possible, and three other senior members of the Hive

Throughout the whole return tup to Alaska Complex, I besuses Instituted to Sam harks plots. When he besend of the estimatementy more and the warp stinguing her, the plots got blocker. He instanted that the undergo modeled examination is made to the plots and the plots of the pl

under the slucture eye, a privacy unvasion globe. Not much could escape the CPs sensers: An arrite housed. Housing Later on, Jessies mer with explained the commendate between heard and fates, means the partie consering fromth. Her argument won enough time to convince the hourd to recovere the following day when Dr. Kins would be present to marvier sponsitions from Classifickie's ab-touse science consumblants. Some charge compositions was required to learned a sent if Kins' experiments failed, the agreed to step board and collider process. How criticals must be sent to the board of the control of the control of the control of the con-

The next day, Senion's medical examination showed unfaction by typemoneme, an intellectible by termin, Apparently, according to the Bonnet, this microbe want't canning the final fetter of Trypenocome gambeines or T-canning the final fetter of Trypenocome gambeines or T-canning the final fetter of Trypenocome gambeines or T-canning the final fetter of the final fet

### Changing The Universe

reduces had subsided! Fellowing the medical grill, Jesusco convened with Sum her office. He were installer paints and a buggy silk shirt; she, slacks and a pattern—shifting blouse. They both shippayed attensift factors: Moodade teys, intense furrows of quastion, worried looks. She sat down behind her desk and rebbed her rose ram where the decete's needle had poked her. Sam sat to her left, engressed in PIG information. Nutrher spoke. Outside, heavy ramelloss from an asteroid

Actions spokes. Outside them, "Is the PHG same needy?"

Tennish reasoured and relaxed her. "Is the PHG same needy?"

Not, into the intercom, she said, "Have Dr. Kins escoried to my office.

While wasting for Kins, the powered on the multi-model tenninal and browned through the podmininary PHG report.

Professor Kins entered, wasting an orange weeker's non-PHF jumposit. Without involution, he seated humaelf next to

Jessica's Greek sculpture. "I did not think you miner excessived this comfortably. It's downight warm in here."
"Modern convenience," carped Jessica.
Same learned beek in his cheer. "Tall the sir usher file do.

Some learned back in his chear. "Tell me, sir, what file do you have on Kiss Tomita!"
"Inst what I told you and what's in this velvet pouch." He held it up, letting it swimp back and forth. "Now I'd like to know why Jess had a red nose yesteday, and not today.

"A minor nose roth, Dr. Kims."

"Really! You know! will need to thoroughly test the effectiveness of my Mirro Teachers. Quark, can you name me a fisst eazyme unspectant to manusols?"

Jessica's first thought was to ask hum how she'd know something like that, but the answer was there, right in her thoughts. It dicked, "Carbonic anhydrose."
"Very good, but my tests will be harder than just trivia.

questions."
"Time to out to the quick," she used before another tangent vected off to trivia. "Are you ready for today's meeting, and do you have this alleged message from any father with you?"
"Yes, squared. Do you remember the day when Bennet an the Levert-cryo experiments, the same day you passed out in Northsdee Cafeform?"

"I remember," she responded.

He handed her a small green pouch.

He handed her a small green pouch.

Jassica opened it and gulled out a glass penguin with a
purple square on its forehead. She tasted strawberry, crap and
sharp. No warning, no preparation, she remembered. The
tactule memorine traggered a memory, unablocked it. SHE
WAS BACK IN THE CAFETERIA WITH HER FATHER.
Jessica pocked use the class openum. Beautiful Mars.

Jessita picked up the glass penguin. "Benutird: What's the purple square for? Imperial conditioning?" she asked pixingly.

"Interesting literary reference, but that was a dammond; Jessiy," he answered quietly. "This is a memonic trager, never much that I want you to know, woutheast, you are a natural piconer, and I—your mother disk too—love you and Sam You's my blood and I four that I have cetter new interest.

something you have no choice but to accept. The genetic sense nee is starting to pick up speed. Unfortunately, ClisimStake has jound jt. I cannot give you any guarantees, either. I'm sorry, 'he said so low that Jessica had to strain to base. Thanks, Dad, but I just want the corporation.' He smiled. 'You shall have it, too. Hopefully, you will

He smiled. "You shall have it, too. Hopefully, never remember this conversation." "Why woulds' 17?"

"Be silent and listen." He took off his wrist computer and placed at next to the sugar dispenser. He engaged the privacy veil, its shimmery envelope enclosing them. Odd, though Joseca.
"Dad, why don't we go into your office?"

Because no one would expect covert behavior in Northcafe, less. So pay attention. If you remember this, I will be either dead or incapacitated.

the entitier dead of incapacitated.

"In your future, a woman named Kasu Tomata well contactyou by insect."

bases do the try to both the practiment, "Broot!"
"Just histon. I have set at fill in our occurity come under
"Just histon. I have set at fill in our occurity come under
Left Kubbb to permit Kins' upenstration. The file is rootate in
application. So must believe that has is beyond our
application. If fresh her ego. When you meet har, you must
not allow her to know of your knowledge of their citizento at law her has know of your knowledge of their citizento get next to her. Never contact him through electronscommunications. We known that Know steps you. Possibly,
she still wants to honor her parents' agreement with
ChamState. Excuted why, he confessed, "Just know."

Jessica felt thoroughly confused. "What agreement? Keen Tomita? As in Tomita Vamity? Dad, you're not making sense."
"Quiet. Dr. Donald Kins will update you on the Tomita.

chai. He's lept his views of her hidden well, but he docus' lagour everyding.

For rapht new, your brain at the steep layes to be to the control of the steep layer to be to the control of the property of the steep layer. The steep layer has been desired by the steep layer to the control of the prestic map for Home sepses as greater detail than the Columban Human Genome Project. Nichter woman as usure of this, only you detend exagedl, upper supposed over three capper NAMD gets exhemate to trapper their memoryse. "Unfertimately, Mr. Tomin has figured out the complete genetic map for Home details and the steep layer layer the steep layer l

Jessica placed the penguin on the table. Carafully, she asked, "What am I supposed to do? Saddenly become her pal and nonchalastly ask her for secrets her own brother couldn't scurre? What does she want with me besides our I-shaps? I wouldn't know a DNA mobicated from an RNA molecule. Jusper felded his hands, and the grammest look Jessios had

over seen graced her father's face, pinching her feelings like gusty scussors "You do not have narcolepsy, Jess. Dr. Donald Kins developed and modified a protozoun occasion - Trypanosoma eambiense - which transfers information directly to your beam's neurons. Trypanosome is a natural at circumventing human immune systems. Instead of making people sick. Don reprograms the protozoan to teach. Each organism carries approximately forty pages of text. "I have been injecting you since you were a little girl. The Micro Teachers work slowly, but Tomita's grasp reaches far. She has taken our children, and you must get them back. Your tutors have green you discipline, and Dr. Kins will teach you comprehension of the wide field of knowledge that's encoded in your brain. Listen to him." A sickenine hole opened up in her stomach, a deep, dark pst. All of the respect and love she held for the short, lovable man opposite her fell into the pst, screaming betrayal On her left hand, a white scar ran over a knuckle. One she'd gotten after a blackout fall. How many more whate lies could her body attest to? How many soars did she have from suddenly passing out and falling? She rubbed the one on her

knuckle, and for the first time ever, she despised the mark. It

sont a chill through her as easy as polar wind did. "...taken our children..." What did that mean? One shivering possibility surfaced. 'What have you done to Sam?' "Nothing, sweetheart, high testosterone levels scramble the Micro Teach information," he answered in a flat, academic tons. "Donald Kins has sacrificed his life's work. His Micro Teachers will change the world, but not a world empty of children. His bitteeness is expected, Jess. Trust him and keep

him safe. You have only three allies: Samuel. Don. and yourself." Jessica had stopped listening. "I hate you for this." Real pain shadowed his expression. "Yes, Jesseen you should," he said, "And the world will cherish you." He recked

up the pengum and showed the bottom to Justica. She saw a tery purple hand BEFORE JESSICA COULD REACT, SHE TASTED STRAWBERRY. "Sis, what's hopponing?" asked Sam. "You are white as a shost " Pure dread and vertigo made her hightheaded, so much that she had to erah the deck to ston herself from falling out of the

chair. As if she had traveled in time back to an awful moment. that memory dragged along its frightening feelings. Out of some she smashed the negressin to bits. She wanted her father present so she could finish venting her rage. His cold grave prevented that. He was dead and completely unaccountable for tampering with her life. She would neither comply with nor assist any scheme until she sorted out the lies. Then she would deal from a position of strength To Sam, who stood close by her, she said, loudly enough for Kins to bear, "Samuel, bas the PIG team scanned well

Negative Good. Put them on standby until I give the green. Double information security, phase 4. Don't bounce anything: have the field tight-beam all data, and use my personal courseyop to transport. Stay passive! Let Tomita come to us, then we will put her under the eye," she ordered, not letting any uncertainty show. "In less than twenty-four hours, I want a tactical nake on line. See to it personally, Samuel. While you're at it, call up a file under Lish Kubba. Test it for a mole.

is that clear?" Sam didn't but an eyelash. "Clear as a glass Then she approached Kins. "You will accompany me to the mooting and present your rat experiment. Speak nothing about sterifization. "Can I get out of this stuped jumpsuit now?" he asked, pulling at the collar After the meeting." She headed for the door, but Kins "Stake, you better know what you're doing with your Jessica gave him what she boped was the most disgusted look she could muster and said, "You're no one to talk." Maybe she saw guilt in his face, but she was certain she smalled it

"Let's go." Over her shoulder, she said, "Sam, bave Three days later, Kisu Tompta sent Justica a simple fax: MISTRESS STAKE, COME TO MY RIVER HOME. WE SHALL DISCUSS A WASP STING AND NEW ORDER. The fax implied that Kins and Stake Sr. had told the truth. which helped to sooth ber anger, but not the terrible burden

Quarters prepare Mr. Kins a room for his stay."

growing malignantly on her conscience. What if I cannot go the information to reverse the sterification places? she thought Who will stop Tomita then? Jessica needed time and hoped for the sake of many unborn that she could live up to her father's expectations. After the easiest meeting she could remember, Jessica

grabbed a mug of coffee and headed to her office. Sam sal behind her security com, picking his teeth and talking on the phone. She sat next to him. "Talk to me." He curred the receiver. "FI key."

To see better, Jessica swiveled her multimedia screen around and keyed F1: A dialor window opened under a picture of an Asian featured woman: Kisu Tomita, age 47 Heir apparent to Tomita World Vanity Industries headquartered in Bolo Horizonte, Brazil/OCCUPATION None current (resigned from senior researcher position w Wisconsin Institute of Evolutionary Genetics)/Status: Beyond wealthy 2.145; one living brother; no marital contracts; no public sighting for last 5.4 years/CURRENT RESIDENCE ovelock Castle, Elsah, Illmoss/MARKET ACTIVITIES. Zero last 7.9 years/WARNING: Black Conn security

enforcement. Shift F1 for preliminary PIG surveillance... Jessica sipped her coffee, ignoring the pain in her nose counted by the coffee's aroma, and contemplated the soft, small face of Kisu Tomita. The photo appeared to have been taken at a function of sorts. She was elegantly dressed. Jessica zoomed in on the micture. Tomits's face cantured a wide smile on her oval face, and her eyes gave no hint of malice. "What do you want from me?" she asked herself in a whisper, in a thought. Who the beil do you think you are?"

She shifted FI to call up the PIG video. Tomita's recture folded to an icon symbol, and the screen image flipped to video mode. The screen filled with reconnaissance footage taken by the PIG team. Super-imposed over the video were information markers that described the environment. Small, eyan blue words dotted the screen The Privacy Invasion Globe was a soccer ball-sized

hoversphere, similar to a media ball, but it had a longer remote namer and a wider array of sophisticated instruments on board. PiGs were illegal in the private sector, more or less Josseca pressed replay, and the PIG crussed above the Missistippi River (Information Marker altitude twenty feet). Shoor rock bluffs bung over (IM:Alton Bluffs) a shore of an asphalt road

Jessica didn't care about local details, so she toggled the information marks to dialog box. The PIG slowed to scan a shants river float of twelve obsolete herecs bolted together in a hodge-podge agrangement. There were two hoge red crants described over the sides. Gen-wires which were strong off the cranes beld up particle board and plastic-patched roofs. Shanty-floats supported a few bandits, but mostly the borneless who sked out a freme cleaning up polluted sections of the Mississippi River in exchange for food and locks passage A scraggly man in a tiger-striped, bullet-proof poncho discovered the PIG snooping, and be took a few shots at it. Jessaca wondered why the PIG team had taken so long to scan a shanty-float. PIGs were too expensive to risk notshots. The PIG team had gotton the message, though, and cruised its PIG four more miles up river to Lovelock Castle.

word. Kisu Tomita's bome modeled a James of St. George castle, constructed right on the bluffs. Three pennents bearing Tomita locos blew in the wind off the east corner tower. Built on the runs of Principle College, Lovelock cast its decadent shadow onto the Mississippi. The only clues that broke it from

#### Changing The Universe

its medieval mold were the satellite dishes, lowlight solar collectors, and the Black corn senses. Two astemsasile grade tracked ClaimStakes\* PIO, which teaderfooted just outside Lowleck's scan permeter. The grad's alreast movement sont a flock of birds into flight from their roost on the southeast tower.

tower.

The replay ended, faded, and was replaced by a mean window.
Locking up from her monite, Jessica asked, "Where's our PIG tram?"

Sam had ended his call and sat fiddling with a monitor seylus. "They're down river, at the Martin Luther King Brodge.

the PIG is grounded on the west bank, smack across from Kisu's wonderland house."
"How many people are in there with her?"

"She's above. Nothing comes or good no manatement, an and odd pleivery, no neighbors of any limit. In the PSC replay, All of it Shims the Bol's above. The property of the Shims of the Shims the Shifts, ten. Her generals being the towns of Elissa and ten of all own-modeling manyer, though, Elissa shims it shows the Shifts, ten. Her generals being the towns of Elissa and the statement of the state bring but not severe cows. Tomats empotes them of the rowe to be rook and green to the state of the

Lovelock Castle is alive. And... "he tossed the stylus to the docktop, folding his hands energly behind his neck, "Tomita's Black corn has a weakness."
That sentle arrense across her face. "You wish.

kidf\* "No wish. Tomits has a loft of Racing Homer pigeons. The pigeons fly outside of her perimeter scan on a regular basis. We can modify a PIG to each one, attach a couple of deactivated Species connajamments to the bed, and list fly Whim Mr. Homer roturns to root, we'll be made. I can disangle between the security here to an off-site cache and then taple-beam her

bet security-base to an off-site cache and then tight-beam her antimissible grid long enough to this; rot out with armore discuss. "Bank on st. 88;"
1 consider it an option." she said, periously. "Dad you investigate the Kubbs fife?"
Sam frownd. "Yes. It does appear to be Dad's perigram style. The mole would have screened out a thrustand warge, Only Dad had access like that to the core. So, how are you

Only Dat the access increase to the cree. So, allow are so, show as wellbeding up. Sulf.

He foliate the consecution of the consecution of the consecution. He is an excellent state, oo. Boology in a whole new world. But I had being farown into a mose if that is what you're asking. I'm secret.

"Dat really demped on Six," said Sam with a trace of the consecution of the c

worry, we'll crack Kim. She obvoorely wants you to just my. That gives us some leaven, if she doesn't fame whout Kim, then she 'll just think you're another power-hungry defininistion. You're best bets is golting her on our tuff. Flay her cgo, it is imperative, Sit. You must get Kim to come here. If she believes you're under costrol, then we how won the first battle. "We have two advantages: Kim is terriffye alone, and she "We have two advantages: Kim is terriffye alone, and she

"We have two advantages: Kum is terribly alone, and she needs ClaimStake, if only for protection. When you meet her, she'll tempt you with something we don't know about yet. Don't let ber mess your head up. Try your best to isolate her from the Black corn. If she so behind the infertible relaxue, we

are cannot show her any mercy. That act would her membership to it the human race. As I said, you must convince her to come to be here."

a "Why?" is the thine of Dr. Kins can medify an organism to phast knowledge, Kins abouldn't be he able to modify the bygs.

to retrieve information? Here, all three of us can week or griting the peri map."

Suddenly, Jesseza felt better. "Practical ideas can be put missed practice" her father used to say. "Put Kinso on the idea immediately. Theoretically, we would only need her brain."

"That's pairing it mechally."
"Samuel, if she hilled our father, I'll see to it personally."
Salence followed, the gusly type that reminded Jesusca that she should have paid more attention to Sam when he suspected assussmation. "I'm almost afraid to sak," and Sam, "but who are not not to tarrest with the sale,"

are you going to target with the auxe?"
"I want you to run this setup... are you sure this office is
safe?"
"This room is safe."

She engaged a pressey veil, anyway. Okay. Point one, borthy after we leave for Lovelock, rea a torce accident will here in camp. Everybody out. "She held up two fingers." Two. Set the sites in our 3-bits; leaked to your speptre with theiry-mante time delay from your cus. Three. All plans and specifications for 1-bits par to be loaded in a transmission specification for 1-bits par to be loaded in a transmission to every company and government on the pible. 
"I want a fuzzy water times and a manual signaler for "I want a fuzzy water times and a manual signaler."

myself when I meet Tenuta. If you don't hear from me as sixty manuter, or if it signal you, his Lovelock with your team, our the mike and the dump. Any problems with that?" Seen shook his head. "Sounds good and fatal. I'll back for plan."

plan."

Too much, felt Jessaca. The ides of razing her family's life work made her sick, but she'd be sick to death before letting Kisu Tomita move in on ClaimStake.

Rays from the florting sun smeared red on Jessica's jupper as it howered over Lovelock Castle. The travel space lowered to the landing flag, and she stopped into the mentioning embrace of Black com detroiten.

The quarter-door shat, and the jupper swizzled off the flag, leaving her immersed in the coo of pupons. Two brick

towers comered the flag area, both with arched entrances. Would Tomits meet her here? Jessica did not enjoy the thought of searching for her.

Praction procked at her boots, making her wait more incomfortable.

The head the bearing first. Then in strees formation of bounded been called the such bowered to stop pointing forward the east corner forwer. She went in the pointed direction through a chem's block-control activately that led to a starrange landing. As the went through the opening, the topped the through a chem's block control activate the pointed direction through a chem's block control activate the proper dislated to the start of the start through the control deam before it would begin to conduct electricity and start to the winding with. Derivate, any replical of with cores, and her with the start of the start of the start of the start of the two start of the winding with. Derivate, any replication that the start of t

Jessica tried pendering her host. "Mistress Tomita," she yelled, "Are you down there?" No respectite. Her patience rus out. She did not like wisins for anybring, aspectally Tomatis' a dolleecent games. She descended the timewell.

One of the state of

to chanlogy, and even give Dr. Kins a new twist. How much control could Kins exercise with scent technology? The question worried Jeassen. No telling how far Tomats had advacced. And Jessica continued her advance down the winding, windly—its stawley! Losing her heat not to crunch something under her feet. Shortly thereafur, the stood at the hottom, weather from the heat. Throughly untecomped by Tomats's

theatres, All that changed to wonder. A wide cavere opened before her, a smooth rock-made done Elited with geometrically georged ansets. Thousands of behavior of the control picks (like the control picks) higher, honeds brazed by her head, there scents grough her information about the cove environment. She could mail them communicating, enforcing order. On the floor, country spectra of acts travelled side-by-wide, transporting to the control of the con

purpose—deted the dome covers.
The storts carried an organized variety of informational molecules. The aphilis that lined the interior cobes were not exciting beinglying, at they did for their art carcializes in the covering beinglying, at they did for their art carcializes in the covering beinglying, at they did for the covering beinglying that the covering beingly did for the covering the c

sutenner; thino beetles carried stark where fragments of oow bent to organic decomposers. Bows the teeming carpst, black lights hung on mill gravity suspension racks. Around them, mud dauber wasps had constructed tetrahedron nasts. Yellow jackets buzzed her with warves of scent information.

In the automatic asymptomic form of the first part of the first pa

coolant fins were transmittable.

"Materias Tomala" Will you. "Jesuca's yell died with the bath that sworp the insect arrowns. A path opened, apper claimlen, Isading to the open-them past. Janeaus took the ratio.

Tomat's form set in a labout-custioned, high-backed due of whitebook. — Jesucias recognized bey sent. A besty or of firsh covered her entire hody. As the get closer to the openetroup said, he regulant the firsh was said. Reaf few and all wany to your Tomata's hody. They drapped, spilled, and like the past of the past o

Kins Tomata's dark features contrasted with the bone cham. Her fice was not the soft one for lesson and seem in the produce, has some heat data. Note a hour prive from her holy some chamber of the soft of the produce of the soft of th

"I don't know what that means, tough girl," Jesseca said, taked spot. She wished he was here by her side. "But I guess offering me a chaer and a cup of ten to cut of the question." The careers burn rose a notch. "Where is everybody? You're taking chances, Ms. Tomta, by letting a conn do all

You're taking classes, Mr. Tomits, by letting a cound on all "Not tree. No one gives in here without my approach". "Not tree. No one gives in here without my approach". "Will see about that, thought issue. "What's policy on here with all the large?" Termits stood and give on a still, knowed with all the large?" Termits stood and give on a still, knowed and the stood of the stood

Mans together. Today, I entend it graciously to you.

"I don't recall seeing that in a memo. So cut the chat
what did your wasps do so me? I didn't agree to be you
gunns pig for new smelling capabilities." She raised he
voces. "You've made my staff, not to mention myrelf, very
mervous. I consider it an act of war."

Kun related against her CAM-C councie. "War? On the contrary. Our framines had in agreement. My honce domaids that I keep at. Are you familiar with the growing turces concening the infectility plague?"

The "The "The proposed of the propert of the padded cannelling."

"There is no need for intrest," Kitst added catually, "There is no need for intrest," Kitst added catually, "I have been a support of the control of the con

No doubt about 1t. Tomits would expect a strong response. Jessica planned to give ber con, too. Sum had beer region. The only sare way to get the gene may would be to form a class working relationship. Kins would have to come to the Alaska Complex. Jessuce knew her act would have to be convincing, or do the was dead, Jessuc be had specified have to be done to the convincing or do the was dead. Jessuc took as top forward and attacked Tomits by choking her, bending her hack over the console.

"You cannot tamper with the world!" shouted Jessica squeezing hard, making sure she got some of Tomist's skir under her imgemails. Repressed sugar flowed from her like electricity from a hattery. Tomist bent like a willow. Sh.

#### Changing The Universe

countered with a cactus-smalling photomount.

I search of its studently weak. She awa glim of comming in

Kin's purple eyes. She fix compelled to release Kin's neek,

his the ways "I depletated to quickly. Latting p., Jessica,

gabbed both of Tomin's phoromous-laden tufts and kneed her

at the stomate.

Tomins acreamed and purbed her to the floor. The fail,

the she distincted caused he Kin's secant static, weathy made

as the atomical contraction and probable has to the Flow. The full, and the contraction of the probable for the filter and the

you cannot do it fast enough to stop me from signaling my people. Living here alone with your fresh machine is a mittike."

'My Black com detected no electrics on your person."
Jessace put her higher-sazed signaler into view. "There is no current flowing. My switch is manual. Now, I want in antidotte for the forthly playing, or I'll make ClaimStake's I-le.

ships. You'll get nothing hit waste."
"That wouldn't he wine, lession Stake. You have the fertility anisote thed into your morthly cycle. Your nose will discharge, as you quantily refer to it, an antidote that will reverse infertility in males and females. If people want children, Ma. CBO Stake, they will have to come to you. You will be my security."

Freinz felt crushed, shummed to the hone. She had no trothe believing Freinz would gad med as an amount of the believing Freinz would gad med as an amount of the believing freinz would gad med as a second travel adors, in those, in stone, to record the media of the believing freinz would be a second travel adors, in those in towns or groups. Hemmitp must aswarm, it must maintain in the honouvelope. Swarm from Bark payd the most part of the believing the second travel and travel a

We are no longer slaves to the gens, Jeense John. I give you forefully and immediality. Their is set the beginning. Somebody half to give jurish back its visites of greatness. It will be at The distributes good, seaking and any her engalader. Thus, the property of the property of the property of the wheat Tourita would be a greenable. "Help me up," also when Tourita would be a greenable. "Help me up," also requested disponsancially," will not risk taking a labit million colonists scross the Barrier on your word alone. For insurance, I want you to come with use on the first wonage to Manner.

Kina stroked her long torits. The hum in the cavers was amont actining. T limk not, "the replical. What it the point."

1 toold you the point. I don't treat you yet. I must abelin, "limitable's power has toold grow considerably from our togother. We must close ranks and merge completely. Agree we have a communication leaks. With an you are safety and don't tall me your Black come is unpregnable. It's not," and don't tall me your Black come is unpregnable. It's not," who don't tall me your Black reason is unpregnable. It's not," who they have been a supplementable of the point. "Otherwise, no don't."

With no hesitation and a slight smile, Tomita saul, "Agond.1 will accompany you. Man will be safer, One we establish our swarm, I am not so he disturbed, and then I will meet only with you."

Not a glimmer of satisfaction escaped through Jessica's made when they shook hand.

Jennica, Sam, and Dr. Kinn conducted their first ultracered meeting two months later about the silent and cold-Scardet Berth. It took place maids the donut-shaped toroidal Scardet Berth. It took place maids the donut-shaped toroidal startles with jumpoints and yellow rabber books, they sat side by side; Jenuica sat in the middle facturg Sam and Dr. Kins Kand-bintemp beliefs mounted on tripols enclosed the best bockende. Jenuica shall it would any time. 'Dr. Kins,' his saud He similed, a rarie gestarte for any of them. 'Yes 'There

was pleasy of skin-some trace amounts of blood, too. The trib hair was also souled with pheromene." "His smile dissolved Positive. It's were conceptrated and does reverse infertility.

"Can we synthesize it?" soked Sam 'Unithely. We'd have a better chance at finding a universal cure to the cold. Sam aighed. "If this gets out, the U.S. government will be up here so fast."

Jestica cut him off. "Then we deal with it."

"yes, Fraultin State, and I've got maide news. Heliania
Synecological Research and French Aerospace confirmed Kirs
here and how to "swarm" the Barrier. The bix world and UnitSam are going to be very interested in 1-ship technology soon

I have a copy of the HSR report; at's not due to be released for two long weeks."

"Good antitative. Let's have our I-shaps an space, beyond traffice oths, Helore the report that the modal. I'll luter-have Tomens and set up a committee to screen colonist applications." Sam added his suspicious. "How are you going to screen

Tomatis's people? You know the will have some croates shound?

"As you might remet, Samual, said Dr. Kins, "I have be marble. The phorecomes ample less statistical evaciend matches about Kins's communication. Like radio, she uses a carrierosapherosmon. I have what to lock for, and any recovers—to be uponle—the has in her service can be ID'd by their blood. I'll have who Tomatis's spoodle got before she serves.

"Damn, Kims, good job," quipped Sam. "I'm glad you're Shut up, Sam," ordered Jussica. To Kina, she asked, "Will your Micro Teachers retrieve as good as the implant information."

"Yes. I can infect Kisu through food and recover the opparisms frough her wast."

"Even if it doesn't work," offered Sam," she will at least be off the planet. And we'll have ample opportunity to tool her metite. She's not dealing with idoos.

Justica baped not.

The day Kinn Tomita arrived at Alaska Complex, Jessica sat in the busy communications room. The technicians around her, their voices, their anovements, the ignored. The television screens consumed her attention. Globel media delet it miss ar opicade of efficients and worth misser; Humanity was scared and Earth hogan feeling an iron hand of doors. She flipped through channels of speech, her silent walling wall.

No children! The plague scorched but conscience and drained her health. Not much showed in the way of darkcircled eyes or weak muscles or cold neght sweats. Her sickness murdered beauty; it whittled a heavy, thick cord of hope down to a delicate thread. Nothing mattered except broaking Tomita's back

No children! People were fatalist mad and mob sugry. The only thing that kept the seams of world sanity from riverage into shreds was the uniformity of oppression. None were stored: the last child horn was now a year old. Snerm and nor banks had become armed encamements as quickly as the habyproduct industry had collapsed. The suicide rate sound higher than all of Earth's war casualties combined. People were feeling beneloss and were burting, but not nearly as much as Josseon Stake, Queen of Mars.

"Miss Stake," said a young teleoperator, "Mistress Tomita and twenty-five Krakow mercenaries are in the central hallway. Do you want the ptc on the main screen? "No," answered Jessica. She didn't need to see them. The intercenances were meetly for show, Tomita wouldn't rely on bullet boys. For Jessica and Sam, they were familian obstacles easily defeated. Knowing that didn't warm her bone. Even with the best possible outcome, this was only the

beginning. When all was said and done, humanity had just taken a left turn onto new road. One priver before traveled.

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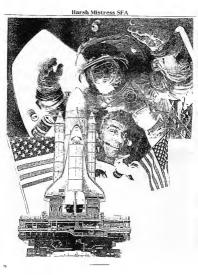
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### INTRODUCTION

This is the second short story of mine which was published in an SF magazine; the first, "Live From The Mars Hotel," saw print in the mid-December 1989 issue of liage Astmov's Science Fiction, and "Free Beer and the William Cases Society" followed two issues later, in the February '89 issue of the same magazine.

The story was benizted by an off-hond comment mode.

The story was inspired by an off-hand common made by AT Dulia, a Texa attorney specializing in space low-yes, there is such a field-when he spoke at the flounding ofference of the International Space University, held at MT in April, 1987. Art was delivering a precessation on commercial space activity, and during the course of his sharites were capable of delivering 2,500 gallions of beer motorbit.

Everyone laughed, of course, and I wrote this odd figure down in my notebook. It wasn't until several months later, fungin, when I rediscovered my notes from the ISU conference, that this story occurred to me. I wrote a latter to art and asked if he was just making a rhenorical comment, he wrote back and told me that he wasn't, and

explained his reasoning, which is faithfully reported in this story. Bob Jennings, the proprietor of the Fabulous Fiction SF bookstore in Worcester, Massachusetts, and the rest of

the gang who having out there are Friday aftermoons, helped me develop some of the other bits and pieces. I set the whole thing in the near-future background I had created for my novel Orbania Decay (my first fiction ander, which visua's trubbished wait many months after this story was published; as it armed out, it would be the first of several short stories and three more novels I would write in this flatter history.

It is now dated somewhat by the subplot regarding the late, not-so great U.S.S.R. and the paramoia which underlined American relationships with the Passinast. When I included this story in my collection, Rude Astronauts, I was tempted to update the story to compensate for reconthistorical events. I chose not to do so, any attempt to do so would be contrived at best, and the distribution to the Cold War.

No one noticed this story when it was published in IASFM. I have silf line unknown writer as the time, and it was overhadowed by a Hugo-watening novella which Since then, it has been translated into Peringuere and Ignatics, when the British edition of Fluid Astronomia was published, the arriva who patiend the over other a science published to the silfusion of Fluid Astronomia was published as International Conference on the Conference second those this 100°p has been reprinted in the U.S. Oreides Rule Astronomia. No, the Immission that I graph published a small-press collection?). It is one of my periroad finories, and I my prod to have it reagages at

--AMS St. Louis, May 1993

### FREE BEER AND THE WILLIAM CASEY SOCIETY

ALLEN M. STEELE Illustrations ©1994 by Timothy Ballou

Careboy Bob told me this stary one slow Wednesday night while we were hunched over the ber in Diamond-suck lack's, so I cast' make a strong case for its ventrily. If you draw hang account in berrooms, you should know that half the soleron you have are outsight loss, and the other half are at least shiptly you have are outsight loss, and the other half are at least the gallbits to completely behave a former beampel in anisot Coebor Bob. Gallithe, strond, or both

If it womn't for the events which happened after Bob bold on about the Bill Casey Society and the Free Bote Conspress, on Skytan, I wouldn't be bothering to pass this yam along the manybe there's a moral in the story. If not a moral, then at least awaring.

Domonalback Jack's was a bole-m-the-wall borry son to Morrit Island. Case Canavers, about 100 per son the construction of the co

from the Kammoly Space Collant. It's a drive for space grouts, which means that it not the sect of place to take the Mich. In fact, bornatis, space groups, secto from the space companies, and the section of the space companies. It is a special space of the space of the space companies, and the space of the space of

But if you can survive a few consecutive nights in Juck's without being punched out or thrown out, you're on the way to joining the nightness: professional spaces whose lives revolve acound the Cape and the space business. Shuttle pilots, furnich gud ground corws, firing room techs, space-art time obtains, thight software writers, cargo loadure, meondogs, the Vacuum Suckers, and beamnesks.

Smoth, Distinguisher, Sark's is all space. On the wall is frimed photos and holose of Mach, I. I. and III distinct hifting eff., of boungacks tothered to notions of poorcents, microsky to the production of the production of the production of III. Viz containing most only and Olympia Station revolving like a large whole in goostateneary orbit above a creacest earth and tomerout strictles from Avistion Weel. Behand the long only top box, along with the varianteed and microartee state of the control of the production of the production of the control of the production of the production of the production of the Ever Reduction of the production of the production of the first from the production of the production of the production of the first production of the production of the production of the production of the first production of the production of the production of the production of the first production of the production of the production of the production of the first production of the productin of the production of the production of the production of the pr with my shotpin. Blow the bustard's head clean off', has emphysics of paces past and present clead and alive, unknown and suffanouse: Tmy Protein, low Marns, Lass Rarzhert, Vigne Bruco Neuma, Dog-Boy and Dog-Grif, Monk Walker, Mike Webb, Eddie the Greifs Geon, Sandy Fey. There's a parture of alix Bisker, as a sharing young Jack I standing with Sobert A. And there's a parture of College on convenient many yours ago. And there's a parture of College on convenient many yours ago. And there's a pristure of College on the College of the College

his bettend off, succining at the camers. He's wearing his raidmank Solven in that picture, and the state of the state of

When I know him. Cowhov Bob was one of those hard-on unemployed cases who were regular fixtures in Jack's, pessing away the money they had made years ago as beamjacks on the powersal project. Jack was one of those semi-skilled young tucks who had signed on with Skycoep and spent two tough years in orbit on Olympus Station-Skycan, as the vets knew the right orbital base. They went because the new was good, or for the adventure, or because they were wanted back home by the law, the I.R.S., or their former spouses. The ones who survived the experience and didn't screw up came home to small fortunes in accumulated back-pay and bosuses. Those guys bought restaurants or small businesses, or just bought condos on the Cape and were lazy for the rest of their lives Some other vets, though, screwed up and lost much of their pay to fines and penalties. Those guys came back with not much more money in the bank than they had before they left. Most of the grupts left the industry. The ones who staved.

for the most part, 'ried to find ground jobs on the Cape, or were accessed to work for the European or the Isquesses. A handful contrast to the Cape of the Isquesses. A handful contrast to the Isquesses. A handful contrast to the Isquesses of Isquesses o

problem. So open the nights in Diamondback Jack's, swilling So et allows the nights in Diamondback Jack's, swilling So et allows the techs and other memployed space grunts, making our-breatful passes at the college culies who thermed in Jack's dening spans feets, keeping has feed inclined on the terminal that the former prime feets, keeping has feed inclined to the strength of the fact round. That's how he told me the story, that widnestey inglish when the place was dead, about the Skycias

beer scan.

He was already drunk when I sat down next to him at the bar. I signalled to Jack to bring me a Bud, and the first thing Bob said to me was the nort of thing one would expect from an instrusted week. Cooking his band toward the door, he asked, "You just came in, didn't ya, Al?"

I nodded. "Did you see any care parked out there?" he

asked.
"Sure, Bob. Yours. Mine. Jack's. Whose car are you looking for?"
He cast me a look suggesting that I had become stupid

nince the last time he had seen me. "Brown Toyota-GM Cullass. One or bow men sitting inside." He paused added, "Wellham Casey Society stacker on the rear window. Remember what I told you last Saturday?"

I shook my head as fack pushed a tallneck in front of me. "I wann't here last Saturday."

was in these last standay, New College and the Seen last Standay. Off comme, I deal to any where I had been last Standay. Off comme, I deal to any where I had been last Standay confidence as KSC, unlest you've a patent at Jack's. Spacors and reporters have an commonious criticalists going back to the dad up when Properts Apach goves pool reporter gover NASA as the space of the sp

So the less said about my stringer work for the Tuers, the best 2,1 how had, resuring the regulery parallel expression of a tray design from a dear-term mentor, I paper. Maybel dish to tell year about it. He bedoed to wards the door a gain. Well, is there a cor like that out there?

Justice where a cor like that out there?

Justice which if I now con.

Society which if I now con.

Society which if I now con. I would be the proposed up. Perhaps at was his minimal alleng, get in employed in a conversation at was his minimal alleng, get in employed in a conversation.

and cage drmks off me all might. I decided to play along. It was a alow, hamid summer might, and I was in the mood for a bill bale.

Jet Jack to being Cowboy Bob another Miller's and I pilled out my ciparettes. Bob took a long hit off his beer, tilted the frayed run of his hat back a half inch, and leaned a little closer to me. Told I over tell you about how we get 44

some store or the Chapter of the Very Control to the Special Well.

The years ago (Cowhore, Bob told me) has crew was dring the final work or \$875.1, the first large-scale solar power satellite to be but by \$\$\text{System}\$, Almost five years and the labor of nearly them bundered mes and worn; had good used to be project, not to mention a houst \$10 billion in corporate inventements under years made for the result was the \$21 the result was the re

installment of the microwive dish attentias at both ends of the distriction miles pan of the powersal.

"So we were pretty proud of what we had done here," Both realled. "Then would be other powersals, of course, but this was the first high one, and we were the crow that was putting out the finishing touches. That called for some kind of oblestation, the course of the course of the course of the course of the supplies in one of the rec rooms and started talking about what we ungated to 60. Are if I transfer out, everyone wanted as beer

The problem with that, of course, was that both Skycorp and NASA had strangent regulations against altobolish was given and strangent regulations against altobolish was given being being and available to space work crew. The roles were tightly unforced, the form of the role of the

alcoholic near-boor—a weak, watery brew which tastes like chilled boar whize.

That just wasn't good enough, 'Bob axid. 'I mean, we'd been gagging on that stuff for the post eighteen meeths. We wanted real beer. Budwaiser, Miller's, Bush, Rolling Rock.

Black Libel...asything!

He hefted his latest bestle to show what real beer looked like. "At this point, y'know, nobody gave a damn about Skycop's realest. The job was done, our money was in the hank. Once the last bank of cells was laid down and the attentum were installed, we' all libe shapped home and it would be the end of a long tour of duty. So we were willing to take some risk, byte careful 'We were entitled in.

a good blowout, man. "Gitting box onto Skycan entailed a smugging operation, Gitting box onto Skycan entailed a smugging operation, of course, in the past, Skycan caws had managed to bribe the control tension of the control tension of the control tension on a weakly basis. A network of reliable connections at the control tension as weakly basis. A network of reliable connections at the control tension on a weakly basis. A network of reliable connections at the control tension of the control tension on a weakly basis. A network of reliable connections at the control tension of tension of the control tension of the

conspiring biasmacks thought about it, the more they realized that, in order to get mough beer into space for a proper party, the operation demanded smuggling an unprecedented volume of contributed into orbit.

"Dog-Boy pulled out a calculator and figured at out," Bob continued. "A Mark III duality," OTY but a caree carnette of

65,000 pounds, which translated to about 1,000 giflons, water or best. That was about 444 casion of 12-ounce roats.

He paused and gazed at his empty bottle; I gave Jack that his aim to bring the sander round. It holded as II was going to have to pump a thousand pallons of hour into Cowboy Bob to pat the story, which was probably what Bob wasted me to do. But the year was getting good and I wasn't about to start ode. But the year was getting good and I wasn't about to start on.

had already deprived Bob of the keys to his Juep—and the former beamjack continued his story.

"Of course, Dog-Boy made that calculation just to give us an idea of what could be done. "Of course that's abused," he stad. But once he told us at could be done..." He kughed, shaking his head.

"You only had about a hundred noonly up there." I see

"I'en gallons of boer for every crewmember was a hitle overhell, den't you time?"

"You're missing the point, All" Bob diapped his hands down on the better, "It want a matter of whether everyone had a str-pack or a hundred gallons. We had just gottam through butding a naneteen equare-mile structure in space. There was nothing we couldn't del. We were the best space construction error there had over been! So it was, it was

Bkc...
"A matter of pride."
"Hell yeah! It wasn't having beer that mattered. It was group the boor, that was the principle. The challenge was the thing. 'He shrugped and picked up his beer. 'So what the fock!' We decided to do it.

So the handful of beamjacks involved in the discussion-Bob, Dog-Boy and Dog-Girl, Eddie the Gentle Goon, Suffering Fred, a few others—not to work in piotting the Free

Beer Consparacy, as it came to be called. There were quite a few obstacles which had to be crossed, the largest of which was circummargating NASA and Skycope, But the obstacle which they dain't foesine was the William Casey Society, personified about Skycan by one incented Glyon, strictimes known as Lenny the Red.

The William Casey Society, of course, was the extreme

inflowing group which had black up in the new centry where the financiar of the Albertantry—the Birthe Society, the financiar of the Albertantry—the Birthe Society, the LaBernalman, the American Naza Party—shed left of the Mondel LaBernalman, the American Naza Party—shed left of the Mondel LaBernalman, the Albertantry of the Albertantry of every streep that when the Birther and the Albertantry of every streep, from companying maximum to held hashed on every streep, from companying maximum to held published thermometrical war had not occurred. Finally by a discount of the new cooperation between the Littled State on the discount of the new cooperation between the Littled State on the Sevent Union—retricularly in enco, as typified by the 'sin' exploration of Maximum also by a mine procedural in Albertant Companying the Companying Companying Companying Companying the Companying Comp

polimeal cloud with fervor, persona, and a few well-placed connections.

Bell Care State of the Care State of the Care State of the Bill Care State of the Bill Care State of the Bill Care State of the Care State of the Bill Care State of the Care

Settish, and Japanese armed forces—namely hyperconsibenhess and submanest—and for hem, thus poving the way for the setting of the setting of the setting of the force of the setting of the setting of the setting of the many from upone to ground-based recisionat with as little environmental damage as possible, barely had the power to the setting of the setting of the setting of the setting of Societies were belinging their own SFS system in ords the fore-set to U.S.S.R. or that the Xermilin had better fink for fry-so to pught—flame whether whether as of pledy domination. But this popul.—flame whether whether as of pledy domination. But this

nac-dress contributions rolling in.

The Cassyptie, to their credit; realized that the SPS construction crews on Objumes station—the latest generation to be Community sympathicars, but were only quilty of spacesace. This was obviously the soft bully of the commander. So the Cassymin seems to far so to plant in town agent on Community sympathicars, to a plant in town agent on Objumps Station in an effort to convince the beamjacks that fare was a plot adout and to convert them to the Caseyite

That person was Leonard Gibson, a thin and somewhat wild-eyed former are welder for Martin Marietta, who managed to get a job as a beamjack on Skycan. "We already had Leony's number by this time, of course,"

"We already had Lenny's number by this time, of course," Bob said, "and we tended to leave him alone." "What do you mean, you had his number?"

Bob supped his beer. "He came abourd Skycan, from day one, passing out Caseyite leaflots, trying to make converts out of his bunkmates, claiming that certain members of the command crew were Russan deepers. Lenny used to get into these brain damaged ratis in the ece soom about how we were all comme dupes, that sort of thing. He even insisted on changing has bounk assignment regularly, asying that he was being bugged or something.

Skyen. He should have fireight which but all of weare cases on the Skyen. He should have fireight with but not horfill wound like that. Both thek his basid. "Year 't that twisted, leven that the state of the should be should b

That's one thing about fanatics, Al. No sense of humor whatsoever." So Lenny the Red found himself ostracized. That made the situation even worse. Now Lenny Gibson began to suspect that the situation was even worse than George White had predicted; somehow, most of the Skycan beamjacks had hear brainwashed, had become willing commis dunes. How else could be explain this complete resortion of his claims? So Lenny the Red changed tactics. Instead of seeking converts, he began to carefully observe the behavior of his fellow beamiacks, watchful for indications that a conspiracy was afoot. Longy the preacher became Lenny the spy, the guy who sat quostly in the corner, listening, watching, waiting. And sending coded messages," Bob added. "The communications officers who worked in command, y'know handled the phone calls which crewmembers made to the folks back home. They sometimes listened in for kicks, and they used to tell us about these bizarre calls Lenny would make to

come number in Baltimore. "Tell Aunt Jane to water the begorists. Report, tell Aunt Jane to water the begorists. The Moon sted. How that the Gorge," "Cowbey Bob checkind. "God knows what that that in ment, but it was obviously reports to the Casey Society," "One. He was beaucally harmloss." Bob passed and sighed, his eyes rolling up toward the erling. "Until he caught the transors about the Free Boer Compiracy, though the transors about the Free Boer Compiracy, though

"Let me guess..."
"Right, Commie plot."

There was little action could be legar cover for long, showed Olympus Station. The speas relation was common, but it was only too large, rumous and hasteny smedie to opened quickly smoog the banked-plus mean and women loving: in the fag wheel, sometimes but not always missing the attention of word sorped out that to consider proceed was been present upveiled to completions of \$795-1. Yet only a small handful of people have the details. If Phil Bigliome, the U.S. Pederal Marchall who benefit misses on country, or fined: Linco, the would have been up to at apparently help disk's, to the

conspirecy consisted to build theif.

Eddie the Gentle Goom managed to make covert
contact with one of the usual sources for geodies at the Cape, a
cargo losslee who for years had fastmend his hank accumal by
stronggling personal-request tenus mits the OT's bound for
Skyvan. (Cowboy Bob woolds't tell me his name, saying that
the same person was still, working for Skyvan at KSC.) The

cargo leader was willing to take the risk, which was considerable, but he along nat large for on the job-fifty grand up front, overhead costs included. Eddes dichared with him and anamaged to get the price down to \$50,000 through a combination of event talk and measur for which the Goot was for the state of the state of the state of the state of Eddes's heats consume to the looker's. The price was still storp, but the co-conspirators grandjurgly agreed to reimburse the Goot for the engages.

Good for the expense, unlivery of 644 cause of boor, was to be one whose Aged III, She shy that first show of on SPA: I was such added to be completed. Dog-Bly and Dog-Gift who had both weeked previously as ground grow at the Cape, weeked both weeked previously as ground grow at the Cape, weeked the beer was packed into an OTV and the transfer vehicle was landed into a shoulf-th ergor bay in the KS Schuller Procusional Centra, it would be smooth stalling. Under standard control and the control of the Complete Space of the Complete to the lander should be smooth stalling. Under standard on the handle same and with its physical score and moved to the lander pad. Once the dentite review of crystal, the Flight finite is engars, sending it towards Organs. Station at it was

any other resupply minion.

So the hard part was to get all that beer into an OTV, a difficulty compounded by NASA regulations forbidding all alcoholic briverages at Kennedy Space Center. There was no way a beer track could simply drive past the checkpoints and off-load over four hundred cases of here at the SPC. Not without attracting the wards of KSC's recording to one, infamous

for their lack of humor.

Eddie relayed these concerns to the bribed cargo loader at the Cape. The cargo loader's reply, in effect, was: don't sweat the details, we've got it covered. Eddie was also asked if he and has budden wanted a hundred counds of beer

mus, chang.

The cargo loader did his job well. First, he purchased 444 cases from a layour wholesale in Thusvilla, apparently control of the cases from a layour wholesale in the control of the control of the cases. The wholesale, not asking too many difficult questions, dishwest he best to the loader's house in Cross Boach, where the cases were staked in his garge.

Then the cargo loader approximate of few tructable crossions who also writted at \$50.5 and, bridge did not \$500 Section 1.00 and the cases were staked in the control of \$500 Section 1.00 section

complicably bounts, and who owned pickup tracks. He found from grow who made that description.

OTV. The cargo massificat for the weekly spirits gar of the cargo massificat for the weekly spirits failed used scheduled well in advance and were perity light at that point. With \$35-1 soon poing on-time, the low-orbit faceley solviness with the cargo poing on-time, the low-orbit faceley solviness conducts "burn gas life-oritical cargo, and he coulds' this are military or scanning palite-oritical cargo, and he coulds' this dissured to the cargo part of the cargo part of the cargo part of the box, who are beginning to the people, and we had the people, but we doll's

have the OTV."

The Mark III shuttle was in operation then," I pointed out. "It could have gone direct to Stycan, and you wouldn't need to use OTVs at all!

Bob shook his head. The Columbia II and the Stepard wave his-ticket birds then. Too high-profile for semangling stiff, and their capes bays could be opposed asyring.

even if you could get something bumped from their cargo manifests. We had to use a Mark II like the Ley or the Sally Ride, which were doing milk runs with no big fanfare. But, y'know, they had LEO ceilings, which meant we had to find an "Anyway, Dog-boy came up with the solution, but

Fred and I did the actual engineering. Three OTVs were permanently docked at Skycan, mainly used to ferry stuff over to the construction shack. Fred and I, when nobody was looking, climbed into one of the things, accessed the guidance computer, and plugged in some new coordinates that Dog-Boy freezed out. Next time the OTV was sent out to the shack, the oneine misfired." Grinning Cowboy Bob sipped his beer. "It ended up in an elliptic polar orbit over the Moon. It was a real

britch to retrieve the thing."

Oh. ho. Convenient little accident ... 'Exactly, Hank Luton had to request a new OTV for Skycan, since we were running three shifts to get SPS-1 finished on schedule and we needed these OTVs to get the sobdone. Skycorp was passed, but they managed to get NASA to bump a science payload back a couple of weeks so we could be sent a new OTV. We got lucky. It was manifested for the Willy Ley, with launch scheduled for April 12, right on the money."

"Hammin. But Skycom doesn't send up empty OTVs. so something must have been bumped from the manifest anyway." "Toilet paper, logbooks, frozen food, screwdriver beads, shit like that. Furmy how easy it is to misplace that stuff

in the warebouse, y'know?" While the Free Beer conspensions were taking care of the OTV problem, though, another anacyting hassle came to their attention, one much closer at hand: Lenny the Red, who had taken to soving on them "It wasn't hard to figure out that Lenny was keeping tabs on us," Bob said. "I guess he thought he was James Bond. but be was about as subtle as an elephant fact. Fred and the Goon and I would be in the sec room, right? Maybe not even

talking about this thing. And been be'd come down the ladder, kinda sauntering across the compartment to sit down real close to us, but being careful not to look our way so he wouldn't notice us. Whistling, for Christ's sake...

"Inconspicuous behavior Cowboy Bob sneared. 'Nothing about Lenny was inconspicuous. It didn't take a genius to see that be knew something was going on. At first we thought it was fearly. 'cause if the Rul Casey Society thought smuggling beer into-

space was subversive He shook his bead in disgust and polished off his latest beer. "Anyway, they were definitely draub to rely on a flathead like Lonny for intelligence, and that was the scary port."

As it turned out, the Casevites did not know that beer was being smuggled into space. Instead, the Society was once again grawing on a favorite old bone of the right-wing fringe which had been lying around since the Soviets had launched Sputnik in 1957: that the U.S.S.R. was perparing to place nuclear warboads in orbit in preparation for a sneak attack on the U.S. from space. Apparently the group had discarded one commin plot for another. In any case, the Society had informed Lenny to be alert for such a scheme, if there was indeed an active Communist element infiltrating Olympus Station

So naturally Lonny Gibson, America's vigilante in space, had discovered just such a plot. There were signs that a nuke would be ferried into orbit aboard an OTV, to be launched by the shuttle Willy Ley on April 12. "Whos, went a minute," I said. "How did you know

what he was thinking?" "Remember those coded messages be was sending to Baltimore? Lenny would write them down first in plain English, then rewrite them into code on the same page. Once he memorized the coded message, he would tear up the page

and dump the scraps into the toilet in his bunkhouse. But the moron forgot to flush the not one day." "So you found the scraps and put the uncoded message together.

Combon Rob nodded, criming. "Plus he talked in his sleep sometimes. Some scorpt agent, right "Raght." I decided to take Bob's story with a few more grains of salt. The yarn was getting a little amplausible But I wasn't ready to call it total bullshit yet. "So now you know that Lenny thought you guys were smuggling a bomb up

there." "Yeah. Even though it was funny as hell, it did present another problem. If the Casey,tes took Lenny's report semously, they mucht decide to tim off somebody, like at the FBI or NASA. Of course the feds might not take 'en seriously, but on the other band NASA might not take any chances, make sure that security at the Shuttle Processing Conter was tashter that week. So Lenny was becoming a pair

in the ass and we had to take care of him. Pitching Lenny out the nearest airlock was briefly considered, but dismissed because nobody wanted to take a murder rap, although the idea was tempting. They also discussed tyme him up and staffing him into a stat locker for a few days, but the drawback was that be might be missed from his workshift. The conspirators thought about simply letting Gibson know what was going on, letting him in on the plan so be would be aware that beer, not bombs, was the contrabant maide the OTV scheduled to serive on the 12th; yet a paranost like Longy would probably not believe the truth. Even if he did, it was always possible that he would twist it around so that the beer was being laced with mind-altering drugs by those evil Rossians

"Dog-Girl, bless ber, came up with the answer," Bob

continued. "Pretty simple, actually. Lonny had to maintain contact with his pals in Baltimore to do any real harm, right This meant he had to use the phone. Orbit-to-Farth phone calls were rationed items, and you were only allowed to use up so many minutes a month. So we managed to get the communications officers to adjust the phone logs in the commenter met a waensy bit so that, suddenly. Lenny was overdrawn on his phone ration for April. No more phone calls, no more messages to Aunt Jane and Uncle George. No stores mosages, no word of a comme plot."
"Nice going," I said. "But that just took care of the

Caseyites leaking word to NASA. What about Lenny himself? "You're getting shead of me, Al. I'll get to that. Hoy, Jack! Another round here!

Around this time a few more of the regulars were wandering into Diamondback Jack's; some were lostering around the bar watching a beseball game on TV, and a pool sums was setting started at the table on the other side of the room. Bob was getting blitted on the boors I was buying him and I was catching up, so I barely noticed the gray who had ofbowed up to the bar a few feet behand Bob. He didn't look familiar, but that was the only impression I had of him. He seemed not to be paying attention to us and Bob didn't notice him; the next time I barpeened to look his way, be was gone. I didn't thrik about him again until later.

Two days before the WHIY Lay made at April 12 mile run, the cargo loader whom Eddes the Goon had behad, with the help of the four other loaders he had paid off, quackly placed 444 cases of boar into OTV OL-3645. The load-in took place during the first shift at the SPC, in the wee hours of the

place during the first morning of April 10.

For the past weak the cargo leaders had been surgifing the bery, a few cases at a men, through the KSC society gate, hidden under camper cape in the belos of their trock. The greeved shift at the Cape was more cargoging than other father at the larnet center, the shift supervisore superrarily also crossless stanking the best more cargoging appracingly also crossle stanking the been under hot TV. By the times the SIC's shift supervisor femaled lise cap<sup>2</sup>-distings of the control of the Cape and the Cape and

Eddie the Goon received a telegram from his terprising firsted liber that day, innecessary informage him that the party supplies were on the way. Goosy gran plasmand across his face, Eddie told libe had the other prenipie people involved in the scam, and they gut the next phase into motion by specualing word along the station grapevine: something wonderful was arriving by OTV at the docking module on April 12, at the beginning of the second shift, and a few

volunteers were needed at the Docks to get at handed from the statics's his down to the ram modules.

You didn't tell them what was coming?" I asked.

Bob belebed and shook his head. "Naw. We wanted it to be a screente. We also didn't went Hank to find out. But

we got enough guys to say they "do be then. Everybody know it was something good."

As anticipated, Lenny the Red got the word through the grapevine. He had realized by now that he messages weren't getting through to paranoid Central—all part of the comme plot of course—she interpreted the subtrenge as the labelling of the congriency. Toght labe, we may company. To be abletted to the congriency in the congriency of the congriency to the contract of the congriency to the congriency to the congriency to the contract of the contrac

We know that Dick Tracy would be at the Docks when our OTV arrived, of course, "Bob said. "He was planning on somethers, though we didn't know whit. There weren't any gues on Skycan that we knew of, but maybe he and managed to meak one up nace he had to assaustimate the said of the

Covered when he got fines:

One of the control of t

Cowboy Bob coughed loudly, then began to hugh. "Jessel Was be passed! He was staring with this look on his face when Dog-Boy got the covers and the ropes off and stated pushing one case after another out into the docks."

Bob detankinity hobble off his best solo. 'Man' Ozo case after another! Fred screaming. 'Free best!' Free best!' And all the surve however, canciers us myshing the cases.

Someone opened a out--and you can imagine how shook up that staff was, after sitting through a rocket launch--and been started spewing all over the place, making these big yellow behieles that fire all around, splattening everywhere, and more guys started appearing, haviling the cases out of the Docks, down the hadder through the upons to the rim. A facking rot, AL and in the middle of all this, Lenny, mouth working like a fifth, and 't behis what's geing on phosis."

Bob shot his sum out wide and yelled, getting the strengtons of everyones in the bar, "This is un-American". Where it the gold dame boods," a matted from the other end of the bar. "Eq. (at \$10 at 90 at 00?"). Bob was doubled over the bar, creaking by and beathless with the memory of the sours. He get some control of himself after a few moment. Clambeing back on his such dropped the backets over him."

Jack Baker gave us one last round of bears and then shut us both off, after frest making me walk a straight line to see if I was halfway capable of driving both Bob and myself home. While Cowboy Bob sucked down his last beer be finabed his story.

number law of the second law o

torie by a day;

Dope-Clin imment during the celebration, Bob and Eddie and Dope-Clin impeed back to the Docks, hashing behind them too all the control of t

Then we threw him in the OTV, emptaed the bags in them so that there were degens of empty cans feating around with him, and closed the hearth, Bob said. "Dog-Get and the Goom reset the nav computer so it would rendervous with Columbus station in LEO, and then we fixed the summywhitch

back to Earth. Nover saw him again.

"That was all?" 1 asked.

Bob, smiling and slumped over the bar, looked at me and shook his head slowly. "Well...not quate. See, I taped a note on the back of Lenny's suit, where he couldn't see it or take it off. It said, 'To the Bill Casey Society, 'hake your drunk stool pipens sed shows ham'.' I disk't sign it, but I dink't learn it, but I dink't learn it, but I dink learn your drunk ham to be the substant any state of thisser, which was how Cow boy lish to lot his contrast boxes and got anade with a copieje of fines which depleted his payed. He ended up no the "mhranble" lish with the major space companies as a result of the Free Beer

Conspiracy. When the hammer inevitably came down, he alone took the pounding.

"But "know what All" he said as I half-carried him towards the door. "I don't give a shit. Y gotta have a sense of humor, god damn fanatics. Following me, telling me I gotta knee m was not that I gotta have a sense of humor, god damn fanatics. Following me, telling me I gotta knee m was not that I guested on "em from a considerable".

hanebt, and I'd do at assen of I could Bob threw up in the bushes behind the bar, then passed out in the shotgun seat of my car after mumbling directions to his house. I concentrated on keeping my vision straight as I carefully drove down Routs 3 towards Cocoa Beach. It was a quarter past midnight when I drove over the Barrana River causeway onto Route A.I.A. crussme through the beachfront commercial strip of Cocoa Beach. The night was block as space, wet and bromid like the inside of a doe's mouth. neen-eletering like the old viscons of the high frontier. A couple of units, a pump and a ladder, from the Cocoa Beach Fire department screamed past us in the left lane as I record the old Satellite Motel. Bob, snoring in the deeths of his drunken sleep, paid no attention, nor did I until we passed the commercial zone and headed into the residential part of town. Then the stranger, the egy who had innecred in

Jack's near Bob and I while he was telling me the story, oddly

also recalled something Bob had told me about Lenny Gibson, how he used to bang around in the Skyran rec room, antempting to assessed to perform the Skyran rec room. As learned fire conner onto the recidential street where Bob told me he lived, I spotted the fire trucks again, parked in the street in front of a small white Biochesia street in the street in front of a small white Biochesia street in the street in front of a small white Biochesia street in the street in front of a small white Biochesia street in the street in front of a small white Biochesia street in the street in front of a small white Biochesia street in the street in front of a small white Biochesia street in the street in front of a small white Biochesia street in the street in front of a small white Biochesia street in the street in front of a small white Biochesia street in the street in front of a small white Biochesia street in the street in front of a small white Biochesia street in the street in front of a small white Biochesia street in the street in front of a small white Biochesia street in the street in front of a small white Biochesia street in the street in front of a small white Biochesia street in the street in front of a small white Biochesia street in the street in front of a small white Biochesia street in the street in front of the street in the street in

proximally adentical to all the other white states beased times the read. The house was ablase with fire absorbing through a collapsing roof and the firement directing streams of water through the bridge front washows, while people should around beyond the piles of houses, waithing the blaze. I allowed to a single behind the total and shoot, both availar. I allowed to a single behind the total and shoot, both availar, house one fire. The shoot of your nighbors has he house one fire. The shoot of your nighbors has he both eyes cancided open, and he stared through the Both's eyes cancided open, and he stared through the

gon's eyes cracked open, and he stared through the wandsheid at the bummen bouse. He duch it say anythong for a few moments, yest stared. "It is one of your neighbor's, son't is?" I asked, feeting an unseasonal chill. Con

his mouth twisted into a sad, angry sort of sente. "What did I tell you?" he whatpund at last. "Fanatics. No god down sense of humor." True story.



## Letters Page interest and all the time you have taken

Dear Mr. Lapine Descension' has a heroine

society

making an end-run around authority. 'Digging Out' is patently a condemnation of a company which exploits people to the point of importling their lives. "Anthony Veidt Il. too" is an attack on modern organizations, wherein the individual, even successful, is "used" by Them. "Nicor Sapiens" has a herome subjected to deadly peril for a perfidious company that sent her on a trivial errand. "The Barefoot Mule" shows the police as enorant and unsympathetic fools. soldiers as worse "Pods" is plainly an aggrandizment of "us", the have-note, at the expense of "them", the established

Sometimes I think I'm a dinosaur, I don't have this modern sort of thinking. I was in the military during the Occupation; when a fine, coarteous, cultured people were abased by the harbarians from America. I also caw what the Marchall Plan and programs like that did for them. I came away proud, not ashamed, of my I saw my company hohave

stupidly or unsensitively at times, but when disaster struck, people could call for help because the ubiquitous representatives of Big. Bad AT&T were hanging on broken poles in begh winds, getting things going again. I saw managment people in the factory working long overtime bours without pay to get the supplies out so people in coming true. harricane-stricken areas could at least

call for help I wouldn't be honest to myself if I adopted the current view that anything of power is a power for bad. 'Norf said. I'm not criticizing you guys. I'm just trying to explain my own weakness. I don't seam to have the right stuff for Harsh Mistress. But I'm gonna try to cultivate st. I think st's a belluva good magazino

> Respectfully, Loring Emery Hambury, PA have done, are doing, and will do

Frank O. Dodge. He truly cherishes your personal

wonder drug.

Dear Str.

to talk with him and the advice you have provided - not that he ever takes advice. can't tell you bow much fun he is baving writing his stories and how much he approcustes getting them published. Without his writing, I doubt he would have made it through his recent heart attack, or at least, he wouldn't have had any mason to at least follow some of the doctor's instructions! His excitement with all of his "success" has been his

We wish you the hest in all of your fature endeavors

#### Sincerely.

Frank S. Doden, Esp. Attorney At Law Colorado Springs, CO This sketch is for "The Right

Armed Bosun's Mate" [a story published in our promotional Con-Mag. Spring 1993, by Frank O. Dodgel submitted by my Grandfather. He suffered a beart attack and asked me to mail this off. Before I go I just wanted to say

thanks? His discussions with you combined with his stories cetting printed bave made him happy, I'd go so far as to say, even amug. Thanks. I love him and it's nice to see his dreams

### Sheri S. Dominigo

I wish to extend my graditude to you for all that you have done for my Grandfather (Frank O. Dodge, "The Barefoot Mule, Spring/Summer 1993]. As one of my Grandfather's brow, have emoved his stories for sometime. want to thank you for allowing other peuple this unsque pleasure as well. Mr Dodge speaks highly of you and to all that know him, that is quite an honor!

> Your Truly. Lalio Gonzales

Once again, thank you for all you We are plad that Frank's family is supportive. We could probably make a good living just selling copies to his reletives, he has so many of them. We are also glad to hear that his heart attack was only a minor setback. We like Frank!

#### Dear Editors Hal Clement passed alone the first issue of "Harsh Mistress" at our most

recent writer's group. I was delighted to that you remembered our meeting at Not Just Another Con last October, which I attended as Hal's gnest. That was the best SF convention I have been to yet, in fifteen years of convention going

I like "Harsh Mistress". Your selection of stories is better than most. and more to my taste than most "Option Four" was delightful, and "Digging Out" was well thought out,

even if sparse in detail. "Nicor Suptens was a good presentation of a formula plot, with a mice twist at the end. I did not like "Peds", but largely hocause I am tired of passimistic writing. The mainstream mags are full of pessimism. storytelling you have presented so fresh.

I am also arrogant enough to want to participate. Enclosed are two stories presented recently at Hal's writers" group. He suggested I send them to Analog because they pay so well, but I would rather be involved with a more vital organization such as yours. The entire writers' group will be

at "Readercon" in Worchester, July 9-11. Perhaos we will see you there I enclose a check for the next three issues. With any luck, I'll be in one of them Sincerely,

#### Ramona Wheeler Rockland, MA I am glad that you have sent your

work to us. However, I would never recommend to anyone that they bypass better paying markets in our favour. There is art and there is rent... It is best to service both needs at once

Door Mr. Lamine Please find enclosed my check for \$5.00 for a copy of your magazine containing a short story by my father.

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Hal Clement

continues with the second installment of his exciting new novel begun in this issue with SORTIE.

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